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STORY HOUR WITH AUNT ANNA

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ANNA LEHMAN

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
WALTER LANGE



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SCENE FROM "THE PRINCESS WITH ONE SHOE"

I

THE PRINCESS WITH ONE SHOE

ONCE upon a time there ruled a mighty king over a big country far, far away.

This king had a lovely daughter whose mother had died at her birth.

A Fairy that lived near the king's castle felt sorry for the little baby, that had to grow up without the loving care of a mother, and in order to protect the child from evil, she gave her a very precious gift.

It was a pair of slippers, formed like a flower, which had three magic qualities: they never wore out or withered, they grew with her feet and had the power to protect the wearer against all harm.

No wonder the princess never touched the ground with her feet without the shoes on, and even kept them on her feet over night for fear they would be stolen.

Now there lived in the wood near the castle a dwarf, who was very much in love with a little wood-fairy. One day he went to her house and asked her to become his wife. But the fairy said:

“How am I to know that I will be happy with you, and without the assurance of happiness I will not marry.”

The dwarf was very much distressed and said:

“I will do all that is in my power to make you happy. What other assurance but my great love and my fortune could I give you? If there is another way to secure your happiness, let me know, that I may try to win you.”

The fairy said:

“There is only one way, and it is a hard one. Unless you can bring me one of the magic slippers that belong to the princess, which will bring happiness and protection to everyone in whose possession it is, I will not marry you.”

From that day the dwarf had no other thought than to get possession of one of the princess' slippers.

The prospect of realizing this wish would have discouraged every other being, but not the dwarf. Everybody knew that the princess never had been without her slippers for a single minute in her life, but the dwarf would not give up hope.

Unseen to mankind, he stayed around the castle for weeks, to find out all about the princess' character and habits, and at last he found out a promising fact. He had heard that the princess wanted to be more clever than every-

body else, and on this knowledge he worked out a plan.

One morning when the king's daughter was walking alone in her garden, she saw the little dwarf kicking his foot, so that his little shoe flew high up in the air.

The princess laughed at the funny sight, but the dwarf said:

"It is easy for you to laugh, but you cannot do the same thing."

"Oh," said the princess, "only much higher." And she kicked her foot so that her little slipper really flew much higher, but the dwarf caught it and disappeared.

There stood the princess, on one foot like a stork, for she did not dare to set the other foot on the ground.

She called for help, but as she was in a lonely part of the garden and a great distance away from the castle, nobody heard her.

At last she decided to jump back to the castle on one foot.

Crying with rage and distress, she told her father about the treacherous dwarf, and the king sent all his servants to the garden to hunt for the mischievous creature.

When the servants came back empty handed, the whole city was searched and at last the whole country.

Weeks went by without anybody having seen a trace of the dwarf, and the princess was in despair.

At last, in his great compassion for his only child, the king had the announcement made, that the one who would bring the slipper should marry the princess and become king.

The beauty of the princess and the richness of the country lured many young men away from their work, but not one of them had been able to go a step farther than this for the discovery of the slipper.

Among others who wanted to try their luck, there came also two brothers whose names were Trueheart and Slyhead, and each had the same character as his name.

The princess liked Trueheart right away, for honesty and kindness shone from his eyes, and it was her dearest wish that he should restore the slipper. Of Slyhead she was afraid, and she distrusted him from the beginning.

Both brothers now started out to find the slipper. Trueheart prepared for every sacrifice, Slyhead's mind was set on treachery.

There is a flower, whose name is "Ladyslipper," and it is just exactly like the slipper the princess wore, only very small and of a different color.

Slyhead rented a large field, put a high fence

around it and planted nothing but ladyslippers. By fertilizing he succeeded in getting the flowers bigger and bigger, and by watering them with colored water, he by and by got the same shade as the slipper of the princess, of which he himself had drawn a picture on paper.

But those flowers, while they looked exactly like the lost slipper, lacked the three magic qualities. They did not grow with the princess' feet, they wore out and withered, and they could not protect the princess against harm.

But Slyhead's name suited him to perfection. He knew how to cheat.

One day he went to the king, put one of the fake-slippers at his feet and began to tell his long-prepared story as follows:

"Oh, great and glorious King, may Heaven forbid that thou shalt ever go through the dangers that thy humble servant had to endure in order to recapture this precious slipper." And then followed a long story about the dragons and giants he had had to conquer.

"Those dragons and giants have sworn revenge, and therefore the slipper might bring the princess into danger if she keeps them over night. I will come every evening and take the slipper with me, to watch over it."

But this he only said that he might change the

slipper for a new one, so that the princess would not notice the fake.

The king was happy and called for his daughter. But the princess did not share her father's joy over the slipper, when she saw Slyhead and heard his story. She had secretly hoped that Trueheart would bring the slipper, for she loved him, and in spite of all the wonderful tales, she could not trust Slyhead.

As she had no facts to bring up against him, she kept silent and did not openly object to her father's plans concerning the marriage which had to follow. But she made up her mind, that she would never touch the ground with this slipper on her foot, and in order to have a reason for her behavior, and also to postpone the wedding, she said:

"I have forgotten how to walk, and since I would not like to jump on one leg to the church, I must ask Slyhead to wait until I have learned to walk."

But the princess never would try to walk, and so was able to put off the wedding for a long time.

Meanwhile Trueheart had gone into the forest and, after searching a long time, found the dwarf. He asked if he could do some work for him, and the dwarf, who was owner of the forest, engaged him as a woodcutter.

Because of his kindness and good nature he was loved by everybody, and after he had done his work faithfully the dwarf asked him what he wanted as his reward.

Trueheart said:

“Please give me the magic slipper that belongs to the princess.”

But the dwarf answered:

“I gave the slipper as a wedding gift to my wife, you must ask her.”

When Trueheart asked the fairy for the slipper, she said:

“I can give you the slipper only after you bring me the golden veil that belongs to the fairy-queen.”

The fairy-queen lived with her fairy-court in a castle in the forest, a great way off. Trueheart went there immediately and asked for work.

The fairy-queen needed a stableman, and Trueheart stayed and worked very faithfully and everybody liked him.

After some time the fairy-queen called for Trueheart, praised the work he had done for her, and asked him what he wanted as a reward.

Trueheart had waited for this moment for a long time, and his heart was beating with joy when he answered:

“Dear fairy-queen, all the happiness of my life depends on the golden veil, and if you could

give it to me, I would be the happiest man on earth."

The fairy-queen became sad, for she hated to disappoint the faithful and kind-hearted young man. Her answer was:

"I have promised to give the golden veil as a reward for taming my two wild horses, 'Thunder and Lightning,' and unless you can do it, you can not have the veil."

This was a very sad prospect for Trueheart, for he knew how dangerous the task was. Those two horses were so wild that nobody dared to go near them, as they would trample everybody that came near, to the ground. Therefore they were kept in a stable quite isolated, fastened with iron chains, and the food had to be handed to them on long sticks.

But Trueheart loved the princess and decided to risk his life in trying the task.

The stable was quite a distance from the castle, it was a hot day and Trueheart got tired before he reached the place. He lay down under a tree and fell asleep. And in his dreams he could understand the voices of the trees and the birds, and to his surprise they were talking of him.

"What a pity," he heard a bird say, "that Trueheart is going to have such a sad fate. He certainly will be killed trying to tame the horses. He is such a kind and good fellow."

“Why should he?” answered a pine tree, “the wind told me the other day that the two horses have a human heart and mind, and they will do harm to nobody who gives them human food.”

When Trueheart awoke he remembered the dream very well, and decided to follow the advice which had been given him.

When he reached the stable he told the caretaker that he had come to tame Thunder and Lightning, but that he was very hungry and first wanted to enjoy a good meal.

The caretaker was very willing to let him have it, for he said to himself:

“Poor fellow; it will be the last time that he can enjoy a good meal, anyhow.” For, like everybody that knew the horses, he thought that Trueheart would be killed.

A rich supper was prepared by the caretaker’s wife and, to the great surprise of the good people, Trueheart said he would like to eat it in the stable.

The very smell of the food seemed to calm the horses, and when, after he had carefully locked the door, Trueheart handed all the tasty dishes on a stick to Thunder and Lightning, they seemed to enjoy it and became so calm that Trueheart could go near and pet them and talk to them.

In fact he told them the story of his love for the princess, and it seemed to him that he could read understanding in the horses' eyes and in the way they received his caresses.

He prepared a place for himself to stay over night in the stable and while he enjoyed a peaceful, happy sleep and wonderful dreams, the caretaker worried himself nearly to death about the fate of the good-looking fellow, who had shut himself in with the two dangerous animals instead of accepting a good bed, offered to him by the kind-hearted wife of the caretaker.

Afraid of finding Trueheart torn to pieces, the caretaker could not make up his mind to enter the stable next morning. All the greater was his surprise when Trueheart came along as happy and strong as ever and asked for a hearty breakfast, which again he carried into the stable.

The horses enjoyed the food, while Trueheart was satisfied with a piece of bread. After this he brought the horses out of the stable and harnessed them to a carriage, to the perplexity of the caretaker and his wife.

The horses were as meek as lambs, but after Trueheart had said good-bye to the kind people, they carried him away in the carriage as quick as a flash.

When he arrived in the fairy-queen's castle,

Trueheart was welcomed with great joy and the fairy-queen gave him her golden veil as a reward.

In his haste to get the slipper he forgot to tell about the kind of food the horses were to have. He hurried away with a happy heart, but he knew that it would take him a few days to reach the king's castle.

He had not walked very far when he met two wanderers and overheard the following conversation:

"Tomorrow the wedding of the princess with Slyhead will be celebrated. Slyhead is tired of the obstinacy of the princess, and he said that if she did not want to walk, she may as well jump to the church."

Those words took all the joy out of Trueheart, for he knew that he never would be able to reach the king's castle before the wedding was over. In despair he sat down on the grass. There was no use hurrying.

All of a sudden he heard stamping and neighing of horses, and Thunder and Lightning came racing along. Not knowing the secret about the taming, the horses had been fed with barley and hay and had become wild again.

Fortunately Trueheart had a piece of bread in his pocket. He gave it to Thunder and Lightning and after they were quiet again he jumped

into the carriage they had been dragging along and, like a storm wind, he went away.

On his way home he stopped at the dwarf's house and received the slipper in exchange for the veil and, after driving the whole night, he arrived in town just in time to see the wedding procession on its way to church.

What an excitement was there when the procession was stopped by Trueheart, who waved his slipper from far away. Slyhead, who had been walking gravely at the side of the princess, who was still hopping on one leg, suddenly disappeared.

With great joy Trueheart was welcomed by the princess and, after he had told his story to the listening crowd, the procession went on to church, with Trueheart in the place of Slyhead, who was seen no more.

When, after the wedding, they were all sitting at the table, Trueheart remembered his helpers, the horses, and ordered that from every dish and bottle that stood on the table, the horses should have their share.

So the horses enjoyed the wedding-banquet, and when they had swallowed the first gulp of wine, they were suddenly changed into two young knights.

They told that once they had been very wild young men, and therefore they had been changed

into horses by an old witch, who had said that they could only be released if somebody gave them wine to drink.

They now promised to be good, and offered their service to the young king Trueheart, who, together with his wife, lived happy ever after.

II

THE STORY OF THE VAIN KING

ONCE, many, many years ago, there lived a very handsome king. He had a great country and many subjects, but he did not care for them at all. He thought of nothing but his beauty, which seemed the only interest in his life.

The statesmen ruled after their own fashion, for the king was too much occupied with his own person. He had dozens of servants who had no other duty than to invent beautiful robes and jewels for the decoration of his body. He changed his robes very often and spent hours in having his golden hair curled, for his hair was his special pride.

Three times a day a golden carriage stopped before the entrance of his castle, and, surrounded by his servants, the king mounted the carriage in a most beautiful garment. He was driven slowly through the streets of his town, and it was expected of the inhabitants to stand in the streets and admire him.

The people had become so accustomed to their

vain king that they loved him for the sake of his beauty.

Then there came a time for the king to be married, and his statesmen were obliged to look for a princess for him, as he himself had no time.

It was not so easy to find the right one. She was not to be too beautiful, for the king did not like to be put in the background, and she was not to be too plain, for the king's eyes could not get used to ugliness.

What other qualities the future queen might have did not matter so much, for the king would not have time to think of her.

At last they found a princess who seemed to please him. She was neither beautiful nor plain, but on her face there was an expression of charming kindness, so that everybody liked to look at her. Her quiet, modest ways suited the king, as he thought it would be a good background for his magnificence and splendor.

So the wedding was celebrated and the king now drove with the queen through the streets of the town.

Everybody was shouting with joy and, of course, the vain king imagined that all expressions of admiration were only for himself and his beauty.

However, there were many in the crowd who were charmed by the sweet, kind expression in

the queen's face, and only a few weeks had passed before everyone in the town knew that the queen had a kind and tender heart, full of love for her subjects.

While the king was thinking only of his beauty, the queen was occupied with the welfare of the people.

The poor and distressed came in troops to the castle, and the queen had help and consolation for everyone.

There was no sufferer in body or soul who did not find the way to the back door of the castle, where the queen, from morning till night, was busy with help and consolation. So occupied was the king with his own person that he did not even know of her kind deeds.

The people no more talked about the new robes of the king and how lovely his hair was, and how many jewels adorned his crown. All their talk was about the kindness of the queen, and there was no end of this subject; there were new, beautiful stories to be told every day.

The vain king did not notice at first that all cheers and admiration were now directed to his wife, but when he found it out he became very angry.

He thought that the people must find the queen more beautiful than himself after all. He did not understand how anything but beauty

could win love, and in order to convince the people he took away her queenly robe and made her dress in rags, and he forced her to sit by his side in his golden carriage.

But the people who were, as usual, in the



NEXT DAY, THE QUEEN HAD TO SHOW HERSELF IN RAGS!

streets to cheer their queen, were only sad when they saw her suffer, and instead of admiration for his beauty, he heard only pity for the queen.

The king was beside himself with rage.

As soon as he reached his castle he called all

his statesmen to a conference and ordered them to find a way to take the people's love away from the queen. One said he thought the queen had lovely hair, and instantly her hair was cut off.

Next day the queen had to show herself to the people with a shaven head and in rags, while the king was dressed in velvet and silk and his golden locks glittered in the sun.

But, all the same, the people's cheers for their good queen, who had to suffer for her kindness, were louder than ever.

The king grew more angry than ever, and had no more rest and sleep. His mind was always occupied with evil thoughts toward his poor wife, and he would certainly have done greater harm to her if she had not disappeared one morning.

The queen knew of her danger and that the king, in his hatred, would not even refrain from taking her life. And while she had borne all the humiliations with great courage, she wanted to save the king from becoming her murderer. So one morning she left the castle and was seen no more.

Next morning when the people found out that their beloved queen had fled, they came in crowds to the castle and inquired loudly for her.

But this did not worry the king, who was only too glad that she had disappeared.

He thought: I will hide myself and when the people have forgotten her I will show myself again, and then they will love and admire me as they did before.

Four weeks the king lived a retired life. He had long conferences with his tailors and valets about new robes and new ways of hairdressing, preparing to show himself in more splendor than ever.

At last he thought the queen was forgotten, and one day, after the whole city had been decorated with flowers and flags, the king had the announcement made that he would take his usual drive.

Adorned with most beautiful clothes and jewels, he entered his golden carriage, which drove slowly through the streets.

But his great hope that he would recapture the love of his people by his beauty, was vain. No cheering was heard, no admiration expressed, and soon the triumphant expression on his face was gone.

The people did not care any more for the king's beauty; they were only longing for their kind and good queen.

Indignant and desperate the king came home and looked into the mirror to see if his beauty had vanished. But no, he was more handsome than ever, and nobody had noticed it.

Nothing in the world could have wounded his vanity more, nothing seemed harder for him to understand. Once again he drove out, but only to experience the same disappointment, and then, due to his grief, he became very ill.

All the greatest physicians were called, but not one could help the king, who had lost all interest in life.

Grief now truly destroyed his beauty, and worry disfigured his face. All day long he was lying on his couch. Nobody was able to cheer him up.

While the whole country was mourning for the lost queen, and in thousands of hearts a light of love and longing was burning for her, there was not one who missed the king. The statesmen ruled, as they were used to, and the days went by.

A whole year passed after all the great physicians had left the castle, and the king had given up all hope of getting well.

At last one of the king's people heard about an old woman, living in the woods, who was said to be able to cure every sickness.

The king also heard about this old woman, and expressed a desire to make another trial to get cured. Messengers were sent out, and the next day the woman came into the king's sick-room.

Dressed in dark clothes, bent, the face covered with a gray veil, she was not a cheerful sight, and the king turned angrily towards the wall when the woman began to speak.

She spoke with a soft, sweet voice, and the king did not interrupt her, and was not opposed to her sitting down next to him.

She said:

“I know your sickness, king, and I will be able to cure it and help you to get back the love and admiration of your subjects. Not by beauty, but by kindness.”

The woman talked for hours, and the king listened intently.

She told him about the sorrows and troubles of the people and the great happiness to be able to bring relief. And slowly there came a great change in the king's heart.

His own grief vanished when he heard about the suffering of other people, and with a deep compassion came a love in his heart, a love towards all mankind.

All of a sudden he felt well, his heart filled with only one thought, to try and bring relief and happiness to his people.

And as he uttered this thought, the old woman prepared to leave, for her work was done.

But the king called her back and said:

“You have healed me, you shall never leave

me, you must help me to make my people happy."

And when he said those words, the old woman straightened up, her veil fell off, the coat fell down, and before the surprised king stood the queen.

She told him how, in disguise, she had fled into a big forest. She had lived there all alone in a little hut, and, as she had had no other means to give help to her beloved people, she had found out the healing power of wild plants. Unrecognized, she had visited the sick people, and the help she had been able to give had spread even to the king's castle, and so she had been called to heal the king.

The king was only too happy to have his wife back again as a helpmate in the good work he was intending to do. And now, as selfishness had left, there was enough room in his heart for a profound love for his wife, who had not only saved his life, but had also filled his heart with a happiness he never had known before.

In the castle and in the town the news of the return of the queen and the healing of the king soon spread about.

There was great joy and jubilation in the whole country next day when the king and the queen drove out together, and it was meant not only for the queen, but also for the king, who,

together with his wife, tried to make his people happy.

The vain king was forgotten, but the good king and his wife were loved and admired, and they lived happily ever after.

III

THE WATER-NYMPH

THERE was once a big, calm lake in the middle of the Forest. Beautiful trees surrounded it and a narrow path led to this lovely spot, but only very seldom did the footstep of men disturb the peace of nature.

At the bottom of this lake stood a beautiful castle made of crystal, and there lived the Nymph-king with his daughters, the lovely water-nymphs. Those Nymphs were half human and half fish, and they had a very pleasant time.

All day long they were playing in the water, swimming from the glittering sunshine into the cool shadow and having all kinds of fun.

Only at sunset, when their father the king held court, they had to assemble in the castle with him.

As a special favor, the king had given his daughters permission occasionally to go on land. They then took human forms and dresses and could play to their hearts' content until the sun set, but they were told that they never could

become a water-nymph again if they stayed longer.

But the water-nymphs thought little of this permission. They thought themselves so much happier than human beings, as they had no human hearts and therefore knew nothing about grief and sorrow. Joy and happiness was all that they could feel, and play and pleasure was all that they had in mind.

They loved each other and they loved their father, and obeyed him, as all good children do.

One day there came a handsome boy to the lake to fish. As soon as he had thrown out his line, a little nymph came swimming along; her name was June. Just out of mischief, she caught the line and held it tight. The boy thought he had a fish, and pulled very hard on the line, and all of a sudden the nymph let it slip from her hand and the boy fell backward into the grass.

The noise of a merry laugh brought the boy quickly to his feet again, and now he saw the sweet little nymph.

“You little rascal,” he said, “why don’t you come out and play with me in a respectable way?”

“Why should I not?” said the little nymph, and, for the first time in her life, she jumped on land and stood there as a very pretty little girl.

“Catch me,” she cried, and the boy ran after her. He was very quick, but the Nymph-girl was quicker, and when he nearly had reached her, she jumped into the lake, for the sun was just setting.

“But why don’t you stay with me?” cried the boy.

“I cannot,” answered the nymph. “If I am not in the water at sunset, I can be a nymph no more, and I would not like to be a girl all the time.”

“But won’t you come back tomorrow?” asked the boy, and a far-away “yes” came out of the deep where the nymph had disappeared.

Little June came to the castle just in time for the assembly, which was held every evening in a big crystal hall.

The king was then sitting on his throne and the children could ask him any favor they wanted, and if it was not against the rule of the kingdom it was granted, for the Nymph-king liked to see all his children happy.

A wonderful time with music and singing and dancing followed and then the nymphs kissed their father “Good-night” and went to sleep in their beds of soft green moss, covered with sheets made of leaves of water-lilies.

Little June that evening could not sleep for a long time; she could not get the adventure with

the boy out of her head. It was a very unusual thing that a nymph should think of going out of the water and playing with a human being. Generally they were very shy and disappeared as soon as they heard a footstep.

Quite astonished at her own behavior, June asked herself why she had done it, and why it had been such a pleasure to play with the boy. She could not give herself an answer and decided to find it out the next day.

Next day the boy came again to the shore of the lake and he had not long to wait for his playmate. She came out of the water and the two children had a lovely time.

They played hide and seek and had a race, and when June was tired the boy brought her flowers and insects the girl had never seen before.

But before the sun slipped under the cover of the quiet lake, the girl jumped into the water, to the great disappointment of the boy.

June was so excited when she came to her father's castle that some of her sisters noticed it. They came to her and wanted to find out the reason, but June kept the secret to herself.

She was glad that not one of her sisters knew anything about her adventure. It was so strange, and she knew that nobody would understand her feelings.

Of course, the boy returned again the third

day, and June came, too. But this time the boy did not want to play. They walked side by side through the summer meadows and the boy said:

“Dear little girl, why can’t you stay with me forever? I know a little hut near here, it is empty, we can live there and play all day long. I will bring you all you want, flowers, birds and insects. I will tell you the most wonderful stories and I will never leave you.”

June liked her new playmate very much and she loved birds and flowers and insects, but when she thought of the sisters she would never see again, and of the scorn of her father, she felt very sad. She said:

“Why cannot I stay a nymph? We could play together every day as we do now, and I would not have to leave my father and my sisters.”

The boy answered:

“If you will not stay with me always, I will return no more to the lake.”

Now June’s heart became still more sad, for she loved the handsome boy, and all the promises he made were very tempting.

The boy begged and begged and promised, and at last she decided to stay with him, and so it happened that the sun went down without the girl’s returning into the water.

She went with the boy to the little hut and, in her joy over all the new playthings her companion brought, she had no time to long for her sisters or worry about her father.

A few days passed in joy and happiness. Trees, flowers, birds and insects were an unceasing source of interest and pleasure for the nymph-girl, because she never had been so near to them before, and the boy knew such lovely stories to tell, and never tired of finding new amusements for his little playmate.

But after a short time the boy began to grow tired of her. He sometimes went away and left the little girl alone in the hut, and now she had plenty of time to think of her sisters and her father. And as the lonely hours became more frequent, and longer and longer, she became homesick.

The boy did not see her pale cheeks and red eyes, and she knew nobody in the wide, wide world to whom she could have confided her sorrow.

And one day the boy went away and did not return at all. Oh, what days of bitter repentance now came for the poor little girl.

She did no more enjoy the playthings the boy had brought her, she felt so lonely and cried so much that her poor eyes nearly became blind.

She longed for her sisters and felt sorry for

the worry and pain she had given her dear, kind father.

Every day she went to the lake, she thought she would feel better if she could see one of her sisters, but the nymphs did not recognize her and fled as soon as they heard her footstep.

Finally, one day, June said to herself:

"If I can no longer live in the water, I will die in it," and she went and jumped into the lake.

But, to her great surprise, she did not die. Two little sisters came and caught her by the arms and carried her to the king's castle.

The father looked very angry as she stood, shaking with fear, before him:

"You have been an ungrateful and faithless child," he said, "and have well deserved to die; but, as you have been punished severely already, I will have mercy on you. Changed into a water-lily, you shall bloom near the shore until you are picked by a human being. This creature will fall into the water and be drowned, but you shall be released. However, as a water-lily you shall keep your human heart."

Instantly the girl was changed into a water-lily and was brought to the same place, near the shore, where she had met the boy before.

With her human heart she had to keep all her sad memories. The place reminded her unceasingly of the hours spent in love and happiness,

and the tears she cried became glittering dew-drops and rendered her still more beautiful.

But instead of pushing herself nearer the shore, when footsteps were heard, so that somebody could pick her, she hid herself, for she rather wanted to suffer than that anyone should be drowned for her sake.

One day all her grief and sorrow were renewed, for the bad boy came to the lake again, and it was an agony for her to see him playing on the shore with one of her little sisters, who, like herself before, had left the lake to play with him.

June could not help overhearing the conversation and, with a bleeding heart, she listened to the same words the boy once had spoken to her.

“Stay with me,” the boy said, “I will bring you all you want and will never leave you.”

Undecided, the little nymph stood there, while the water-lily suffered agony lest her sister should have to endure her own fate.

In her excitement, she pushed herself nearer the shore and let the sunbeams reflect themselves in her tears. As soon as the boy noticed the flower he said to his companion:

“Look at this wonderful lily; I will pick it for you.”

As he bent down he fell into the lake and was drowned. At this moment the lily was changed

into the nymph again and, as quickly as she could, she pulled her sister into the water, for the sun was just setting.

The little sister was angry, and said:

“Why did you take my boy? I wanted to stay with him on the shore.”

“Oh, sister, thank heaven you are saved!” cried June, and it was only now that the sister recognized her. She listened to June’s story while they were hastening to the castle in order not to be too late for the assembly.

The king was very glad to have June with him again, and he forgave her, and all the sisters were happy. But before they went to sing and dance, June asked her father if he would grant her a favor, as sign of his forgiveness.

The king promised, and June said:

“Dear Father, you have given us permission to go on shore and become human beings. Not only I myself, but also this little sister, has found out what a great danger it is. Please withdraw your permission, so that no more harm can come from it.”

The king was only too glad to do so, and after that June enjoyed the evening pleasures as she never had done before.

The sad adventure was soon forgotten and, with all the nymphs and her father, June lived happily ever after.

IV

THE STORY OF LITTLE STAR

IT was on a bright summer evening. The angels had just begun to light the stars and the moon started his travel across the sky. Sometimes he stood still and talked to the stars, like a father to his children.



SOMETIMES THE MOON STOOD STILL AND TALKED TO THE STARS.

To the big stars he said:

"Take good care of your little sisters, watch them so that they do not fall."

The little ones he reminded:

"Be obedient to your big sisters. Don't wiggle too much; you know it is dangerous."

Just on this evening when the story begins there was a little star who was very naughty. It would not stand still. It bent to the right and to the left and forward and backward. It was so curious, it wanted to see all that was going on in the world beneath. The big star beside it said:

"Oh, little star, why will you not stand still? You will fall down on the earth, and then you will become a very unhappy little child. You know that this is a very severe punishment."

But the little star did not listen. It kept on wiggling, and the big star became very nervous, and said:

"Oh, please, little star, why can't you behave like the other stars? I know you will bring trouble to yourself."

But the little star did not pay any attention. It had just discovered something on earth it had never noticed before, and it bent over to see better.

And as it bent still farther, it slipped. The big star reached over to catch it, but was too late. Down, down the little star fell, until it reached the earth.

It fell into the garden of poor working people and became a little baby-girl.

The poor woman to whom the garden belonged found it next morning and carried it into the house.

“Look what I found,” she said joyfully to her husband.

But the man said:

“You must take that baby to the police-station at once. We are too poor to bring up a strange child.”

But the woman begged:

“Oh, please let me keep it. We have no children of our own, and it came last night when the star fell. There is a saying that this brings luck.”

The man gave his permission, and so the girl stayed in the house and was called “Little Star.”

Little Star grew and became a very good little girl. But she was not a bit like other children. She would not run around and play; she liked to sit in a quiet corner and sing songs that nobody had taught her. They were all holy songs, and Little Star sang them with such a sweet, clear voice that everybody liked to listen.

If she had not been so shy she would have made many friends, for everyone liked her.

Once on a bright summer day, when Little Star was about seven years old, she was sitting

near the window singing her sweet songs, when a rich lady in a wonderful carriage happened to pass the house. She told the driver to stop, and she listened for a long while. Then she came out of the carriage and entered the little house to find out to whom the sweet voice belonged.

When she saw Little Star she liked her very much, and she said to the parents:

“Dear people, would you not let me have this little girl? I will take her to my castle and bring her up as my own. I will ask nothing of her but to sing very often. To you I will give a large sum of money, so that you can buy a larger house and more ground and have an easier life.”

Little Star was called in, and because she saw that the father would like her to go, and because she wanted her mother to have a more prosperous life, she said good-bye to father and mother and went away with the rich lady.

They arrived at a great castle. Little Star received the best of food and care, and beautiful dresses, and because she was allowed to stay all by herself in the garden or rooms, and could sing to her heart's content, she was quite happy.

But, when a few weeks had passed, the rich lady came one day to Little Star and said:

“I am going to have company tomorrow, and I want you to sing before my guests.”

Little Star turned pale and said:

“Dear lady, I am not able to sing before company. I can not remember one little song and I can not hold a tune.”

But the lady said:

“That is nonsense, Little Star; you must sing, —you can if you will.”

With tears in her eyes Little Star pleaded again and again, but without success.

Next day she was given a new white dress and a new hair-ribbon, and then she was called into a big hall where many people were sitting.

She stood on a platform, and at a sign from the lady she was to begin.

Little Star tried very hard. She opened her mouth, but instead of a song only a few false notes were heard, and when she saw the disappointment in the eyes of her audience, she ran out into the garden and waited in tears for her punishment.

This was hard enough. The lady was very furious when she came out into the garden after her guests had left. As soon as she saw Little Star, who was hiding in a corner, she said:

“You ungrateful child, how could you disappoint me so, after all the kindness I have shown to you. Go out of my sight forever.”

Little Star tried to explain, but it was in vain. Without a further word, the lady sent the little girl home to her parents, and they were told that

on account of her disobedience and ungratefulness she would not keep Little Star, and the parents should send back at least a part of the sum of money she had given them.

What a sad reception she had at home. The mother cried and the father scolded, and nobody would believe that the little girl really had not been able to sing before a crowd.

Only a few weeks Little Star had to stay at home. One day there came to her parents an old gentleman from the town near by. He had heard talk about the child's beautiful voice, and when he listened to her sweet songs he said that he would like to take her to the town and teach her to become a great singer.

The father did not want the gentleman to be disappointed, and so he told him about Little Star's shyness and her experience in the rich lady's home.

But the gentleman, who was a great professor of singing, said:

"For many years to come, Little Star will not have to face an audience. I will guide her study, which will take a long time. By the time the little girl is ready to appear in public she will have lost her shyness."

He also promised that Little Star, as a great singer, would earn much money, and the little girl went with him.

No sooner had the great professor begun to teach the child than he found out a very peculiar thing. As soon as Little Star tried to sing other songs than her own, her voice did not sound as sweet and clear any more, try as hard as ever she might. The old gentleman really did his best to teach her and Little Star studied very hard, but without success. Neither knew that the girl had brought from heaven the holy songs she sang so sweetly, and that her gift never could be used to earn earthly wealth.

And, after some weeks of fruitless effort, the old gentleman said one day to the little girl:

“Little Star, you know yourself that you never will become a great singer. I think you had better go home to your parents.”

Little Star thanked the kind-hearted old man and bade him good-bye, but she did not return home. She knew how disappointed her parents would be. Her mother's tears were even harder to bear than her father's scolding and, worst of all, they would not believe in her good will.

Homeless and friendless, she wandered from house to house and sang her songs, and was glad when the people offered her something to eat and a place to sleep.

In summer her life was not so hard. There were berries and nuts in the wood, the soft moss offered her a cool resting-place when her limbs

were tired, and she did not mind loneliness, since her shyness kept her from making friends with other people.

But when winter came, oh, what a hard life it was then for Little Star!

The wind was cold and raw, the sunshine did no more warm her, the ground was frozen and covered with snow. The people did not open their doors and windows when Little Star sang, for it was too cold. Nobody bothered to give her something to eat. Little Star had to suffer much from hunger and cold, and often at night she did not know where to lay her weary little head for rest. She became thinner and sadder every day.

On Christmas Eve, when all mankind is happy, Little Star was at the end of her strength and had no place to go. When her poor little feet no longer could carry her, she went into a church and sat down in one of the empty pews.

In order to get warm she started to sing her little songs in a very feeble voice, and through her songs rose her prayer to heaven, a prayer for relief.

And the dear Father in Heaven granted her wish, for when the people came to church next morning they found the little girl dead.

Little Star had gone to heaven. But even

there, where everybody is joyful and happy, Little Star remained shyly in a corner and did not want to enjoy herself with the angels.

She liked to sit in a quiet corner all by herself and sing her songs, just as she had done when she was on earth. But this is not the way in heaven.

One day there came a big angel to Little Star and said:

“Dear little child, why do you not play and enjoy yourself? Did you leave somebody on earth for whom you are longing?”

“Oh, no,” said Little Star, “but I had been a star before I became a child, and I would like to be a star again and shine in the sky as I did before.”

For now she knew what had happened to her, and she was longing for her sisters and the beautiful moon, and she told her story to the angel.

And the angel immediately changed the child into a little star, and two angels came and, holding it on both sides, they carried it just to the same place in the sky where it had stood before.

What a wonderful surprise for all the other stars, that the little sister was back again. Little Star had to tell her story over and over again, and when the moon came along his road, he was so happy to see his little lost child. But he

could spare his warnings now, for Little Star kept as quiet as the big ones.

And when another little sister was disobedient, Little Star told her story, and that always had effect, for no one would long for such a sad experience as our Little Star had to go through.

And if you, dear children, look up to the evening sky and you notice a tiny little star, that never wiggles (for most of the little stars wiggle a little bit), then it is the Little Star whose story I have told you.



SCENE FROM "THE FAIRY'S CROWN"

V

THE FAIRY'S CROWN

ONCE upon a time, long, long ago, there was a place where fairies lived. This was the most lovely spot you can imagine. It was a meadow in the middle of a big forest, surrounded by trees, old as ages, watered by a silvery brook and covered with lovely wild flowers.

In the daytime it looked just like any other meadow, but at night, when the moon poured its silver light over the earth, the magic began.

At midnight there arose a music as soft as the humming of bees and then many fairy-children appeared in dresses made of flower-leaves, and with veils and golden crowns on their heads. And these lovely creatures danced as sweetly as only fairy-children can dance.

When a sound was heard, hush, how quickly they all vanished! For they did not like to be seen by mankind.

But one spectator the fairies on the meadow had, all the time, without knowing it. This was a little deformed dwarf. His name was "Spot,"

because his large body and thin legs resembled an ink spot.

Spot lived in a mountain-cavern with hundreds of other dwarfs, and every night he came secretly to the fairy-meadow where, hidden in the branches of a tree, he watched their dancing.

And every night he turned quite green with envy because of not being able to dance as they did, and his heart was set on getting one of their magic crowns. He knew that in those crowns lay the power to dance so wonderfully, for whenever one of the fairy-children took her crown off, she ceased to dance.

To possess such a crown was the dwarf's greatest ambition ever since he came to the meadow, but as yet he had not been able to get one.

At last, one night, he was able to obtain his wish. One of the fairy-children came quite near to the trees upon which Spot was sitting and, with a quick grasp, he took the crown and disappeared, while the fairy-child looked all over the ground, for she thought the crown had fallen down.

Beside himself with joy, Spot arrived in his mountain-cavern and he prepared immediately to give his comrades a performance of his dancing. Of course he acted very mysteriously.

"Dear brothers," he said, "form a circle, light

your lanterns and I will give you a great surprise."

The other dwarfs obeyed, and when the mountain-cavern was lit up with many lanterns, Spot put his crown on his head and started to dance.

Oh, what a funny sight! Spot jumped from one leg to the other, his arms stretched out, his eyes rolling with pleasure, for he thought he looked just as sweet as a fairy-child.

The laughter of his companions he took first for appreciation, but when he realized that they were making fun of him, he got very angry.

"You ungrateful people," he said. "You don't know what real art means, you don't deserve that I show my skill before you." For he still believed that he danced wonderfully.

He went out, and from then on he danced only in the woods where nobody could see him.

But the woods are not a good place for dancing, and one day the dwarf stumbled and fell and sprained his ankle.

There he lay and could not go home, and God knows what would have become of him if Mary had not come along just then. Mary was a little girl from the nearest village who was looking for berries.

She heard a deep groan, came nearer, and saw the little dwarf in great pain. She said:

"Dear me, little fellow, what is the matter with you?"

"Oh," said the dwarf, with a new groan, "I don't know, I think my leg is broken. I stumbled over one of those silly roots that stick out of the ground."

Mary bent down and looked at the badly swollen ankle.

"I will do what mother does in such a case," said little Mary, and she ran to a little brook near by, wet her handkerchief and bandaged his leg as good as she could.

"Now lean on my arm as hard as you can, and try if you can step on your foot," advised Mary.

Spot tried but, with a cry, he fell back on the ground.

"I can not walk," he said, with tears of pain in his eyes.

Little Mary felt so sorry that she also began to cry and was wondering what more she could do for him.

"Maybe I can help you to get to your home," she suggested, "if you tell me where you live."

"My home is not far," he answered, "if you could carry me over there to the mountain, I could call my brothers."

As carefully as possible Mary lifted up the dwarf and directed her steps to the mountain, when the dwarf called out:

“Stop a minute, please. Somewhere here on the ground lies a little crown. You can take it and keep it for yourself. If you put it on your head you can dance like a fairy-child.” And to himself he went on: “It is nothing for me, I should have left it with the fairy-child.”

But Mary was afraid to hurt the dwarf in bending down, and said:

“I would rather come back afterwards and look for it, thank you very much.”

She carried Spot to the mountain and set him carefully on a stone.

“Thank you for all that you have done for me,” he said, “and whenever you need my help you can call on me, my name is ‘Spot.’ ”

And before the girl could thank him once more for the crown, the dwarf had disappeared.

Mary now had time to look for the crown, and she found it right on the place where the dwarf had been before. It was a wonderful thing, made of pure gold, adorned with pearls and diamonds.

“It is too precious for me. Nobody will believe that it was given to me. I had better hide it.”

But because she was all alone in the woods, she put the crown on her head and began to dance. And Mary was a sweet little creature, it looked really beautiful. Mary felt very happy and arrived home in great excitement. Instantly

she searched for an old white veil that once was her grandmother's, wrapped the crown in it and put it thus on her head.

Then she came out to father and mother and brothers and sisters and began to dance.

How surprised they all were. Nobody had ever seen a child dancing so wonderfully, and the whole village came running along to see Mary dance.

And in the villages and towns in the neighborhood the people wanted to see Mary dancing, and all of a sudden she was a great artist, receiving gifts and money, and was able to support her poor parents.

At last she came into the capital of the kingdom. The news about her great skill and grace reached even the king's palace, and the king also wanted to see the child who danced so beautifully.

Everyone can imagine Mary's happiness when she received an invitation to dance before the king and the court. And when she arrived at the king's palace and saw all the beauty and splendor that spread before her eyes, she became quite dizzy.

Below a chandelier with thousands of candles she danced, more sweetly than ever before, until all the assembly burst out in endless praise and applause.

Of course there were also many people who envied Mary, and one of them was the king's daughter, who was sly enough to hide her feelings.

When the performance was ended the princess went to her father and said:

"Dear father, would you allow Mary to be my friend and stay with me for a time? I want to take dancing-lessons from her."

The king gave his permission and Mary went with the princess into her bedroom, lay down in a silken bed and the princess told her about the wonderful life they would now lead.

When Mary had closed her eyes upon the happiest day of her life, the promises of the princess followed her in her sleep and made her dreams even more beautiful than the reality had been.

But the king's daughter was a very wicked girl. She had found out that behind the dancing lay a magic power, and as soon as Mary was asleep she arose and searched among Mary's clothes until she had found the crown.

She went into the next room, put the crown on her head, and saw now that she was able to dance as beautifully as Mary, and she danced all night and did not even go to bed.

As soon as morning began to dawn, she called Mary out of her dreams.

“Mary,” she said, “you have stolen this crown somewhere. I will now keep it for myself, and you have to leave the castle right away. Don’t dare to tell anybody that I have taken your crown. Nobody will believe it at any rate. But if I, the king’s daughter, should say you have stolen something, you will be put into prison.”

Mary did not understand at first, but when she realized the bad intention of the princess, she pleaded:

“Dear princess, you have all you want, and I have nothing but this crown, and have to support my poor parents. Please let me have my crown. It was given to me by a dwarf, out in the woods.”

But pleading was useless. The princess herself opened the doors for Mary and the poor girl ran away so quickly that it really looked as if she had done something wrong, so greatly had the princess frightened her.

She ran all day without resting, and when evening came she fell down tired to death, in a meadow near the woods.

Now she realized the full extent of her trouble. She did not dare to go home, she thought nobody would love her any more, and she did not know what to do.

She cried and cried and did not even notice when the sun went down and the moon rose.

Suddenly she heard a music as soft as the humming of the bees. She raised her head and saw a wonderful sight.

Many fairy-children in dresses made of flowers were dancing on the meadow, and what surprised Mary most was that they all had the same kind of crowns on their head as she had had.

Just when she was thinking where the dwarf could have gotten the crown, she saw a little fairy-child coming along.

This fairy-child had no crown on her head, and her face looked very sad.

When she saw Mary she started as if to run away, but when she saw that Mary's eyes were red from crying, she stood still and asked:

"Dear little girl, why are you crying?"

"Oh," said Mary, "I had a crown just like those of the fairies, and I was able to dance so wonderfully, and make my living and support my parents and everybody loved me. And now the king's daughter has taken my crown away."

"But tell me, dear girl," asked the fairy-child, "how did you get the crown?"

"A dwarf gave it to me. I found him in the woods with a sprained ankle. I dressed it and carried him to the mountains and therefore he gave me the crown."

"But don't you know from whom the dwarf got the crown?" asked the fairy-child again.

"Yes," said Mary, "I heard the dwarf say, 'I should have left the crown with the fairy-child.'"

"Oh, dear girl," cried the fairy-child, "then it was my crown that he gave to you. The bad dwarf took it, and I have been looking for it all the time. Oh, how I cried! See, all my sisters dance and are happy, and I alone must stand aside and can not take part in their joy."

And the poor fairy-child had tears in her eyes.

"Dear fairy-child," said Mary, "if I had my crown still I would give it back to you. I can be just as happy without it, now that I have seen how you have to suffer from the loss."

"Have you any idea how we could get back the crown?" asked the fairy-child, and after one moment of silence Mary cried out:

"Oh, yes, the dwarf said I could call whenever I needed him. Perhaps he can help."

Full of hope, the girls ran to the mountain and called three times, "Spot," "Spot," "Spot!"

After they had waited a little while the dwarf came, and when he saw the fairy he blushed, for he remembered his wicked deed.

And the fairy-child said:

"Dwarf, you have taken my crown, but I will forgive you if you will help us to get it back."

Mary told him about the king's daughter, and both begged him to help them.

Spot did not hesitate long. He had felt sorry

all the time about his wickedness and was glad to be able to pay his debt to the fairy. He started to think the matter over and, after a little while, he said:

“I know a magpie, a very clever bird. I will



AFTER THEY HAD WAITED A LITTLE WHILE, THE DWARF CAME.

send her to the castle to get the crown for you. You girls go to the meadow, in one hour everything can be done.”

Mary and the fairy-child now went back to the meadow and sat down to wait. The fairy-child did not know how to express her happiness over

the thought that she soon would again be able to join the happy plays and dances of her sisters, and Mary did not know if she was dreaming or not, when she saw all those beautiful fairy-children in their flowery dresses move so gracefully in the moonlight.

The time passed so quickly that they hardly knew how the hour had passed. A happy shout made them look round, and there came Spot, waving the crown in his hand.

The girls ran to meet him, and the joy of seeing the happiness of the fairy-child, when she put the crown on her head, was enough reward for both the dwarf and Mary.

But it was not the fairy-child's intention to let Mary go without a sign of her gratefulness. She asked her to wait, and disappeared just for one minute. When she stood before Mary again, she held in her hand a big purse filled with shining gold, and gave it to Mary.

To the dwarf she offered forgiveness and friendship, and promised to invite him and his brothers to all the parties the fairy-children would give in the mild, bright summer nights.

They all felt so happy now that Mary nearly forgot to go home.

But when the moon was hastening to go down behind the trees and when all the fairy-children stopped their merry dances, Mary started home,

after she had given hearty thanks to the fairy-child and the dwarf.

What a joy when Mary arrived home with all her money that made her parents wealthy people, and she received all the love she could wish for.

So she lived happily ever after, for you know, the more happiness you bring to other people, the more comes to yourself.

But she never heard anything more of the fairy-child and the dwarf.



VI

THE STORY OF A CRICKET

IN a barley field near the forest lived, for many years, Mrs. Cricket. She was quiet and modest, friendly to everybody, and therefore had many friends.

But Mrs. Cricket also had enemies without her knowing it, and really without its being her fault.

Those enemies were the birds in the forest, and the only reason for their hatred was her chirping.

They could not understand why Mrs. Cricket chirped all day long and did not stop even when the birds began to sing in chorus or when Miss Mockingbird sang a solo.

They were greatly offended that Mrs. Cricket had no respect for their art, and all the inhabitants of the "Songvillage," as they called their quarter, had united to find means to get rid of their noisy neighbor. Of course they wanted to keep their consciences clear in the matter and therefore it was not easy to find the right way.

One day there was great excitement in the

Songvillage. Mr. Woodpecker called all the villagers to a meeting, to talk over a plan concerning Mrs. Cricket.

Not only the mister birds, but also their ladies and children were present. Mr. Woodpecker opened the meeting with the following speech:

“Ladies and Gentlemen! I have called you today to talk over a plan concerning our disagreeable neighbor. How would it be if we should send a delegation to Mrs. Cricket to ask her, in a very polite manner, to find another dwelling-place for herself?

“The delegation could propose the barley field on the other side of the forest. They could describe the place in a very attractive way and make her understand that it was for her own good.

“She would find more company there, and would not be disturbed all the time by our singing. Only in a polite way can we get rid of her, as we have no right to force her to go.”

This proposal was accepted with great enthusiasm, and Mr. Woodpecker was asked to take the delicate matter into his own hands, and choose two other birds as his companions.

Mr. Woodpecker, of course, was very proud of the important part he played in the community, and he choose two bluebirds to go with

him. The meeting ended with cheers for Mr. Woodpecker.

Next morning, after Mrs. Cricket had brushed her husband's coat carefully with a branch of a fir tree, the delegation left on their important mission.

They found Mrs. Cricket at home and very much surprised to receive a visit. She listened very attentively to the speech of Mr. Woodpecker, and when he had ended she answered in the same polite way:

"I am much honored by your visit and thankful for your attention. But, please tell your community that I am not in the least disturbed by your singing. It harmonizes very well with my chirping. On the other hand, I love solitude and would never leave my dear barley field. I don't think I could feel as happy anywhere as here."

With these words and a polite bow she left the Woodpecker and the bluebirds, who returned in very bad humor to the Songvillage.

They saw many long faces when they told their experience, and Mr. Woodpecker was not regarded with the same respect as before.

His ambition, however, helped him to find another plan very soon, and another invitation to a meeting caused new excitement.

As soon as all the community was assembled,

Mr. Woodpecker knocked with his beak on a tree,—that was the sign for the opening of the meeting.

“Ladies and Gentlemen,” he began, “I am pleased to be able to give you today a new idea concerning Mrs. Cricket. My plan is this: We will arrange a big concert and ask Mrs. Cricket to take a number on our program. I am sure she will be very much flattered. As soon as she begins to chirp, we shall start to laugh at her and show our disapproval in every possible way. Some of our children could even be allowed to whistle and throw huckleberries at her. After this disappointment the mortified lady will find another dwelling-place very quickly, I am sure.”

This plan suited the inhabitants of the Song-village exceedingly. They cheered and clapped with their wings, and it took quite a while until Mr. Robin got the floor.

He said:

“Ladies and Gentlemen! Twice already Mr. Woodpecker has shown us his brilliant spirit and his great interest in the welfare of our village. I hope you all will agree with me if I propose to nominate Mr. Woodpecker as our mayor.”

Jubilation and cheering without end followed this speech. Mr. Woodpecker was announced mayor and his vain heart swelled with pride and happiness.

In his joy he promised to make all the preparations for the concert himself, which was to take place next Sunday.

The meeting ended with another cheer for the new mayor, and on the way home everybody talked about the great joy of getting rid of Mrs. Cricket very soon.

Next day the mayor brought the invitation to Mrs. Cricket and, to the great joy of all, it was accepted. With great enthusiasm the preparations were started. The mayor himself made a platform for the soloists and decorated it with leaves and branches. After this he wrote the invitations on birch-leaves, for they have lines, using his beak as a pen and the juice of blueberries for ink. The sparrows had to carry them from house to house.

At last he had the brilliant idea of building a triumphal arch.

But what was Mrs. Cricket doing?

She was chirping peacefully all day long, and did not get the least bit excited about the concert. On Friday she sent a messenger to her friends and relatives on the other side of the forest. She asked them to come and listen to the great concert that was to be given the following Sunday by the birds in the Song-village, which could be heard splendidly from her house.

Very early on Sunday afternoon all the birds of the village were assembled in the concert-place, and Mayor Woodpecker went off to bring the guest to the concert hall.

But what a surprise when he arrived at Mrs. Cricket's house!

More than twenty crickets were sitting there, talking and drinking tea, and Mrs. Cricket played the part of a hostess.

She did not wait for Mr. Woodpecker to talk, but said:

"Oh, Mayor Woodpecker, I am sorry that I had not time to send you a message that I can not come to the concert. You understand that it would not be fair to leave my guests. But I am sure Miss Mockingbird will not mind taking my part in the concert, and I and all my friends will be so thankful for the pleasure you give us."

Now what was Mr. Woodpecker to do?

Boiling with rage inside, but with a smile on his lips, he left Mrs. Cricket's dwelling, and he felt very badly when he arrived in the Songvillage.

All the birds stretched their necks to see the unusual pair arrive, and the disappointment that followed can be imagined.

There was no concert at all that afternoon, for, as the mortification of Mrs. Cricket was to have been the most important thing, they had

prepared for nothing else. And besides nobody felt like singing.

From the barley field sounded happy chirping, and the birds had only one thought: **Revenge.**

It did not take long until rage and hatred gave Mayor Woodpecker a new idea.

This time he did not call together the whole community. With just a few confidential friends he talked the matter over. It goes without saying that in a few hours the news had spread, anyhow.

They agreed to the following plan: First, they wanted to make Mrs. Cricket unconscious with strong-smelling herbs, then place her on a leaf and two strong birds were to carry her through the forest to the other barley field, which they had decided was to be her dwelling-place long ago.

“It is no crime,” said the Mayor, “as no harm will be done to her. We are only helping her to save the moving-expenses.”

Now they assigned to each the part he was to play. The meadow-lark was chosen to find the herb, little chickadee was to carry it secretly, on the following Saturday evening, to Mrs. Cricket’s house, and two strong blackbirds offered their service to carry the unconscious lady on a leaf to her future dwelling-place.

All these decisions were made behind closed

doors, so that the secret should not come to Mrs. Cricket's ears.

Mayor Woodpecker took no active part this time; he had had enough from his former experiences.

But Mrs. Cricket had her friends; whether they were butterflies or insects or woodspirits, it is hard to say.

How could she otherwise have sent the following message to her aunt who lived on the other side of the woods:

"Dear Aunt, won't you come to see me this week end? There is an opportunity to return in a newly invented airship. It won't cost you a penny."

Of course, the aunt came, if it was for no other reason than the airship. She stayed a few days and heard from her niece all the intrigues of the birds.

On Saturday evening our Mrs. Cricket went away and did not return at all, while the aunt stayed in the house, which was filled with an unusually sweet odor.

Next morning, early, the two blackbirds came, placed the aunt on a leaf and flew away with her.

It was a pity that the birds had to keep quiet, otherwise they might have dropped the cricket. But after they had placed their burden on the

ground, they danced with joy that their plan had succeeded so well.

On their way home they pictured to each other the awakening of the hated Mrs. Cricket, and they were very proud indeed to have done their work so well.

But when they came near the Songvillage they stopped all of a sudden, looked at each other and grew pale. They heard a chirping. They did not want to believe their ears. They were frightened to death and hurried home.

In the Songvillage they found the greatest excitement.

All the birds had seen how Mrs. Cricket had been carried away, and right after that she had begun to chirp as loudly as ever, in the field. Was that a miracle? Was that a punishment? The birds all felt very down-hearted, and it took a long while before a blue-bird found courage to go down and look.

He saw Mrs. Cricket sitting cheerfully at her door and chirping.

When the birds heard this they became more frightened than before. No song came from their beaks that day. They could find no explanation for these happenings, try as hard as they pleased.

Meanwhile the aunt woke up in the other barley field. The first thing she did was to visit

all her friends and to tell them about her mysterious return and about all the intrigues of the birds.

The crickets held a council about this matter, and decided:

In order to protect their relative and friend, and also because the place was very inviting, they all would move over to the other barley field.

The plan was realized immediately.

By hundreds the crickets came next day, and were welcomed heartily by our Mrs. Cricket, who really did not care to live alone any longer.

It was no wonder that the birds in the forest held their ears. Never before had they heard a noise that so offended their musical feelings.

But what could they do?

After they were nearly sick with rage, they decided one by one to leave their beloved Song-village and find another dwelling-place.

They all went with a sad heart, and the last one to go was Mayor Woodpecker, leaning heavily on the arm of his wife. It was repentance that crushed him, for had they left Mrs. Cricket alone from the beginning, they could have lived peacefully all their life in their beloved village.

The crickets soon felt at home in the barley field and never regretted the change.

VII

SCALLAWAG

ONCE upon a time there lived in a big forest an ugly little dwarf. His name was Scallawag. He was small and hump-backed and had a mean disposition.

Above all he hated mankind, for all human beings seemed to him big and strong and beautiful. His idea was that they knew only happiness, because they had everything that he lacked, and that made him so bitter and jealous that he tried to harm them whenever he could.

The poor little fellow never was happy unless he could do mean tricks, and so much was his heart set on harming others that he lay awake half the night to think of mischief.

There was a farm near the little cavern where he lived, and often he came at night and rolled stones on the fields, and was happy when the farmer, in the morning, swore and scolded.

Whenever a traveler came by, Scallawag would hold a branch or a stick before his feet so that the tired man stumbled or fell. He knocked baskets and pitchers out of children's hands whenever he could get near without their seeing

him, for he had a magic cap that rendered him invisible.

Once, on a cold winter day, came a little boy into the forest to gather wood. The poor boy had only a thin little suit on, his hands were stiff and red with the cold, and his face had a very sad expression.

He also seemed to be tired, for he gathered very slowly and he often had to rest.

Scallawag was hiding behind a tree and at once thought of a way to harm the little boy. And he soon found something.

No sooner had the little boy bound together his wood and fastened it on his back, than Scallawag came out of his hiding-place and cut the string with a big knife, so that all the wood fell on the ground.

Poor boy! He had to start all over again to gather the wood with his frozen little hands.

Scallawag had expected the boy to get angry and scold and swear, and had looked forward to it as to a great pleasure. But nothing of that sort happened, and as soon as the boy had his wood safe on his back again, he turned towards home.

Mean Scallawag! Again he came near and cut the string for a second time. He wanted to see the boy angry.

The boy stood still, quite discouraged, and

tears came in his eyes. Then he breathed in his hands to get them warm, gathered the wood and fastened it on his back once more.

Scallawag was surprised. There was a strange feeling in his heart when he saw the tears in the boy's eyes, and an impulse nearly made him come out of his hiding-place and help, but this mood left him very quickly, and out of spite he cut the string again.

The boy turned around, and when he saw all his wood lying in the snow again, he sat down and cried bitterly. And soon he had cried himself to sleep.

To fall asleep in the snow on a cold winter day would mean death. The boy would never open his eyes again if he were left alone, Scallawag knew that.

As he thought of all this he felt very strange. As he came slowly near and saw the boy lying in the snow so motionless, the mean expression of hatred at last left his face.

He himself hardly knew what he did, when he kneeled down beside the boy and started to rub his face and breathe into the little blue hands just as the boy had done before.

But it was all useless, the hands did not get warm and the boy did not awake.

At last Scallawag began to drag the boy by the arm until he reached his little cavern. It was

hard work, but he succeeded with great effort, and was thoroughly exhausted.

He made a fire and then again he gently rubbed the little boy's hands.

After a little while the boy opened his eyes, looked round and began to cry.

"Why are you crying?" asked Scallawag.

"Oh, my poor Mother," cried the boy; "she is waiting for the wood, and can not go home. I am so tired and so hungry."

Scallawag ran to the cupboard and brought bread and butter. He warmed some milk at the hearth fire and gave it to the boy. With shaking hands the boy took it, and the way the food disappeared in the boy's mouth showed how hungry he must have been.

The warm milk brought the color back into his pale cheeks, and when Scallawag saw that his strength had come back he could not refrain from asking questions, for it was the first time that he had spoken to a human being.

"Please, dear boy," he asked, "will you tell me about your mother and yourself and why you are poor?"

"Oh," said the boy, "we have always been poor. My father died long ago, but as long as Mother was able to work we were content, because we have our little home and had enough to eat. But now Mother is sick and can work no more. We

have not been able to pay the rent and have no money to call a doctor and buy the medicine that would cure her. I do errands for the neighbors, but my earnings are not enough to buy coal, so I came to the forest to gather wood in order that Mother, at least, should have a warm room."

Scallawag was greatly surprised when he heard this story. He always had believed that all mankind was happy, never had sorrow and trouble, and he went on asking:

"But the farmer who has his field near here, he surely is always happy and never has want and need."

"Oh, yes," said the boy, "the farmer has a hard life, too. He works so hard in his fields and then sometimes there comes a thunderstorm that spoils his harvest, and he has nothing left to feed his children and animals."

"But the rich man, who comes by on horseback sometimes, he lives in a castle and wears splendid clothes, he must always be happy," went on Scallawag.

"I know whom you mean," said the boy. "This man really is rich, but he is not happy, either. He had a dear wife and a sweet child, and they both died. Now the man is all alone, and that is often harder to bear than hunger and cold."

“So you think that everybody in this world has his trouble?” asked Scallawag.

“Yes,” said the little boy, “everyone has his trouble, but God gives us strength to help us through, and he sends also better times. But now I must go.”

But when he thought of the wood, that lay scattered in the snow, he felt discouraged. Tears came into his eyes as he said:

“Oh, now I have to go out and gather up all the wood. I did it three times, and every time when I thought I had it safe on my back it fell down again. How will I ever get through the job and bring the wood home to mother?”

Scallawag felt a pang in his heart, and quickly he said:

“You stay here by the fire and wait.”

And out he went and took a little wagon and gathered the wood that was lying round, and put more to it. Then he filled a basket with food and medicine and right on the top he put a big purse with money. Then he called the boy and gave him the wagon with all its contents.

The boy could hardly believe his ears when the dwarf told him that he could keep the wagon, which would make it easy for him to carry wood and do errands for others. And Scallawag explained how his mother should use the medicine and how he should prepare the food that was

in the basket. The money would pay the rent, so that they need not worry about a place to live in.

With tears of joy the boy exclaimed:



HE HELPED THE BOY TO DRAW THE WAGON.

“Oh, what a kind-hearted dwarf you are! Oh, how happy I am! Thank you, thank you a thousand times for your gifts. How Mother will enjoy all, and she will become well, and we will be happy. The Lord will reward your kindness and will make you happy also.”

Scallawag was happy for the first time in his life. Never before had he experienced a feeling of joy as at this moment, when he heard the boy's words and looked into his eyes shining with happiness.

He helped the boy to draw the wagon until they reached the border of the forest. There he stopped and said:

"Dear boy, whenever you need my help, come and see me."

The boy wanted to thank him once more, but the dwarf had covered himself with his magic cap and could be seen no more.

When the boy reached home with all the gifts, his mother rejoiced with him and she became well instantly after she had taken the medicine. They both praised the kind-hearted dwarf, and the boy never learned what great blessing he had brought into Scallawag's life.

For from that time Scallawag was changed. He was as kind and helpful now as he had been mean and jealous before.

His life, spent so uselessly and wickedly before, was now a constant source of joy and happiness to himself and others.

The farmer now had better times, not only that he did not find any more stones in his fields, but sometimes the work was done over night. The good man laughed and whistled with joy,

and Scallawag, behind his magic cap, laughed too, because he was a grouch no more.

When a tired wanderer came by, Scallawag cheered and encouraged him and showed him the shortest way. He helped many people to carry baskets and pitchers, and when the face of the people brightened, that was the only thanks the little dwarf was looking for.

How happy his life was, now that he had learned to share the joy and sorrow of others, and instead of lying sleepless at night and planning mischief, he slept well and soundly, just as we all sleep when we have tried to be good during the day.



SCENE FROM "THE MAGIC FOREST"

VIII

THE MAGIC FOREST

ONCE upon a time there was a little boy whose name was Harold. His father and mother died when he was six years old, and as he had no relative who would bring him up, he lived in a poorhouse.

This poorhouse was a miserable place in a small town and, as the meals were very meagre and nobody cared for the poor little boy, it was no wonder that he did not grow up like other children, but stayed very small and thin.

When he was fourteen years old, he looked as if he were only nine or ten, but the caretaker of the poorhouse told him that he now had to go and earn his own living.

So Harold left the place where he had spent his childhood. It had been a sad life, and sad was his parting. There was no one to say a kind word to him, to give him encouragement and advice. The few people who had shared charity with him were old and cranky and had never taken any interest in the timid little boy. There was no one to give him a kind wish on his way and no loving eye followed him when

the door of the poorhouse closed behind his feeble steps.

He had been told to go and find work, and Harold really had the best intentions, but he soon found out that work was a hard thing to obtain for a person as small and frail as he.

Wherever he asked he was laughed at, and he had to be satisfied when kind-hearted people offered him something to eat and when he found a place where he could lay his tired head at night.

This was a very sad life for Harold, to be homeless and friendless and to be mocked because of his small stature, and he often wished that he were dead.

One day, while he was going along the road, two travelers were walking ahead of him and he could not help overhearing the following conversation:

"I wonder what that black line is over there, seems like a forest," said one of the wanderers.

"Oh, dear," said the other, "have you never heard of the Magic Forest? If you take my advice you will keep away from it. A magician lives there, who changes all bad people into trees."

"What is your idea in taking me for a bad man?" said the first one. "I never killed anybody, and I don't see why I should have to fear the magician more than you."

“Well,” answered his companion, “you may be sure that I will keep away from him. Nobody that I know of has such a clear conscience that he does not need to fear the magician. But it seems that in former times many people came that way, for there are thousands of men and women changed into trees.”

When Harold heard those words he thought: “What great luck it would be for me to be a tree. I would never be hungry and cold, I would never be sneered and laughed at. I would be big and strong, my head would reach high up in the air, the wind would shake me and little birds would build their nests in my branches. How happy I would be.”

And he decided to go to the magician and ask him to be changed into a tree.

He went right straight to the big forest. But just when he was about to enter, a voice called:

“Stop, little boy, don’t you know that this is the magic forest? Whoever enters will be changed into a tree.”

Harold stood still, in great surprise that somebody should take notice of a poor, forlorn little creature like himself. And when he looked around he saw a little house and an old woman standing before it. It was her voice that had warned him.

He came nearer to her and said:

“Thank you very much, dear woman, but your warning is only a promise to me. I have no other wish than to be changed into a tree.”

And he told her about all his misery, and the sad life he had lived, and as the old woman listened such a kindly expression came into her wrinkled face and she said:

“I now can understand your wish, my poor boy. May God be with you, and whenever you should need a friend, come to me.”

And Harold thanked her for her kindness and entered the wood.

He had walked quite a while when he came to a little house, and before the house on a stone sat the old magician, with a long, white beard, and an owl resting on his shoulder.

Harold stood quite still until the magician lifted his eyes from the big book he was reading. When the magician noticed the little boy, his face darkened with anger, so that Harold trembled with fear.

“What are you doing in my forest?” asked the magician.

With a quivering voice the boy answered:

“May my boldness be forgiven, but I have heard that you are able to change mankind into trees, and I came to ask this favor of you.”

The magician’s face expressed great surprise as he said:

"This certainly is a peculiar wish; will you give me the reason for it?"

Then Harold told his story, and when he had finished, he asked again to be changed into a tree.

This time, as he looked into the magician's face, it did not look half so furious, and his voice sounded mild when he said:

"You certainly do not look as if you could be of much use in the world as you are now, but I will keep you for a while and see if you will not grow big and strong with the proper food and care. If, after one year, you still want to become a tree, I will grant your wish."

And Harold stayed with the magician. He got plenty of wholesome food and was taught all kinds of work that helped to develop his weak little body. By and by the boy began to grow and he became so strong that, after one year, nobody would have recognized Harold any more.

The magician was like a dear father to him, and Harold loved him with a thankful heart. When, after one year, the magician asked Harold if he still wanted to become a tree, he shook his head and asked to be allowed to stay with the magician all the time. And the magician was willing to keep him.

One day, when the magician was again reading in the big book, Harold came to him and asked what was written in this book.

And the magician said:

“In this book I have written the names of all the people I have changed into trees. And, if I am not disappointed in you, and you can fulfill a big task in life, I will release all those people for your sake.”

Harold was very happy to hear this, and wanted to go into the world right away to find a big task. But the magician said:

“Not before you are eighteen years old and well prepared, will I let you go.”

Now Harold was more eager to learn than ever, and he became unusually bright and clever. There was no work that he could not accomplish, and, beside all general knowledge, the magician taught him many things that no other mortal ever knew. He even learned to understand the voices of birds and insects, and they obeyed him just as well as they did the magician himself.

Harold grew taller and stronger than any other youth of his age, and on his eighteenth birthday he started on his long-prepared-for journey into the world to find a great task and release the trees.

The best wishes and blessings of his dear foster-father accompanied him when he, after a hearty good-bye, left the forest.

The first thing he saw was the little house, and he remembered the old woman who had spoken

to him so kindly, many years ago. He said to himself:

“I wonder if the old woman is still living. She once was so kind to me, I will now look for her.”

So he went and knocked at the door. As the old woman opened it, Harold said:

“Dear woman, do you remember the little boy who went into the forest many years ago?”

“Yes,” said the old woman, “I remember him well. Poor little fellow, I wonder what has become of him.”

“I am the poor little fellow,” said Harold, and he told the old woman all that had happened and that he now wished to find a big task out in the great world in order to release the trees.

The old woman was so surprised and pleased that she said:

“I have nothing but a few wise rhymes to give you for the way, but if you remember them in time they will be very helpful to you.”

And she gave him the following four verses:

The first:

Don't always look around,
Look also on the ground.

The second:

And be a thing ever so small,
It can be useful after all.

The third:

If from the outside you will judge as such,
You will be mistaken very much.

The fourth:

If words should be to you unknown,
Read them right to left or upside down.

Harold learned these verses by heart, thanked the old woman and went on his way.

He wandered through many countries. How different it was now compared to his childhood days! Everybody liked the big, strong lad who tried to be kind and helpful to everybody. He had no difficulty in finding work, but his mind was set on a big task, and it was not so easy to find it.

At last he came to a country where everyone was sad and distressed, and at his question the people told him that their beloved princess had fallen into the hands of a bad witch and had disappeared.

Harold at once went to the king and offered his help to release the princess.

But the king did not cheer up at Harold's proposal. He said:

"Many a young man has offered me his help, but the circumstances are so difficult that, until now, nobody has succeeded in releasing my dear daughter, and I doubt if anybody can do it."

But Harold was not discouraged so easily, and

he listened attentively to the story which the king told him in the following words:

“Nobody knows in what way my daughter is changed. The only thing I know is that she is hidden in the old, big tower that stands in the garden. But there are no windows, and the only door is locked from the inside. To try to open the door by force would mean to kill the princess, and until now nobody has been able to enter the door, as the only opening is not bigger than a pea.”

Harold went into the garden to take a look at the tower himself, and found everything as the king had told him. He went up and down the garden path, looking up, in order to find a way to open the door. And while he was walking along the first verse that was given him by the old woman came to his mind.

“Don’t always look around,
Look also on the ground.”

And he looked on the ground, and the first thing he noticed was a tiny little beetle, running before his feet.

First he did not pay any attention to it, but all at once he remembered the second verse of the old woman.

“And be a thing ever so small,
It may be useful after all.”

He picked up the beetle, put it on his hand

and thought: "I will see if in this country the insects also understand my language." And he ordered the beetle to sit still, to go ahead, to come back; and the beetle did exactly what it was told.

Suddenly Harold had an idea.

He went to the castle and asked for a thin but strong thread. One end he fastened round the beetle's body and the other end he kept in his hand, and he went to the door of the tower and said to the beetle:

"Go in through this little hole and run around the bolt until it is well fastened on the thread."

The beetle went into the tiny little hole, and when it came out, after a little while, the thread was much shorter and Harold knew that the beetle had done as it was told.

Now Harold set the beetle free, and began, at first slowly and then a little harder, to pull the thread.

And all at once the lock gave way and the door flew open.

Then Harold entered a big hall, where he found nothing but stone figures. Young people and old, beautiful ladies and ugly old women, boys and men were standing there made of stone, and Harold thought:

"One of them must be the princess."

And, as he knew that the princess had been young and beautiful, he tried to locate the most

beautiful statue of all, believing this must be the princess. But it was very hard to find the most beautiful, as there were so many of them, and while he went, undecided, from one to the other, the third verse of the old woman came into his mind:

“If from the outside you will judge as such,
You will be mistaken very much.”

And now he went and found the ugliest one, and that was not hard. It was an old woman with a big nose and a big pimple on the end of it. This statue stood on a pedestal and letters were written on it.

But as hard as Harold tried, he could not understand the words that were written there. He tried and tried for hours, and when the sun went down and it became dark, he lost hope ever to be able to release the princess. With a very sad heart he decided to go to the king and acknowledge his failure. And he had already reached the door, when he suddenly remembered the fourth verse of the old woman:

“If words should be to you unknown,
Read them right to left or upside down.”

And he turned back to the statue and read backward:

“Call my name and kiss me twice,
And you will have a great surprise.”
And he called “Isabelle,” for that was the

name of the princess, and he kissed the stone figure twice, and all of a sudden there stood the princess before him and blushed and, with tears of happiness in her eyes, she said:

“How shall I ever be able to reward your wonderful courage for venturing into this awful place? Years and years I had to be in this terrible state, with a living heart among all these lifeless statues and nobody came to release me. Again and again I heard footsteps near the door, and with trembling heart I awaited my rescue. But all in vain. And now that I had given up all hope, your strength and ability have brought my freedom. Let us haste to the castle, my father will surely reward you.”

Together they went to the king and, after he had greeted his daughter with great joy, he said to Harold:

“Thou hast proved thyself worthy to be my son-in-law, and thou shalt help me to rule my kingdom. Let us go and prepare to have the wedding tomorrow.”

But Harold, in all his happiness, for he loved the princess, remembered his promise toward the kind magician, and he said:

“Much honored I feel by your confidence, great and worthy king, and I shall be the happiest man with my beloved bride; but before I can think of my own happiness, I must travel to

the one to whom I owe all, and fulfill the promise I have given."

Before he could go on to explain, the angry king shouted:

"If there is anything in the world that thou valuest higher than my daughter and my kingdom, thou dost not need to come back at all."

And all love and respect was now changed into rage. He would not listen to Harold's explanation or to his daughter's pleadings, but chased Harold away with his dogs and charged him never to come before his eyes again.

With sad thoughts and a heavy heart, Harold started on his way home. He loved the princess and suffered greatly, now that he had lost her, but not once did the thought come to his mind to break his promise to the magician, for the sake of his own happiness.

While he was wandering along the lonely road, a monk in a dark garb and a big hood over his head overtook him, stopped and said:

"You are so sad and lonely, it seems that you need a cheerful companion."

But Harold shook his head and said:

"I am not fit for a joyful companion, and nobody can help me."

But the monk said:

"Tell me your story; one never knows, I may be able to help you, after all."

So Harold told his story, and when he came to tell about his great love for the princess, he heard a sob and afterward a peal of laughter, and when he turned to his companion he saw the monk's-garb falling and his surprised eyes beheld Princess Isabelle. She sank into his arms and, between tears and smiles, she told him that she had left her father's castle forever, out of love for him who had saved her, and that she would go with him wherever he went.

But Harold said:

"Dear Princess, you are used to all the comforts of a king's castle, and the magician has only a little hut."

And, with a smile that expressed all her love, the Princess answered:

"I shall always be happy with you, wherever you go."

And so they went together and were very happy. After a few days they reached the magic forest late in the evening. The magician rejoiced greatly when he saw Harold and his companion, and when he heard what a great deed Harold had done, and how faithful he had been to his promise, he said:

"This evening you both need a rest, but tomorrow the task will be fulfilled."

And next morning when Harold woke up, he was surprised to see the sun shining in his room

and all the trees gone, and to hear a great noise before the house.

When he came out he saw thousands and thousands of men and women standing there, and everyone had a gift for Harold. Some of them had gold and silver and others had precious stones, and all was given to Harold for releasing them.

The magician gave him all the land where the forest had been before, and Harold built a big castle and married the princess.

And when they had lived there only a short time, there came a messenger from Isabelle's father. The king had repented of his cruelty towards the lovers soon after his daughter had left the castle, and now he sent a message asking them to return, and as a sign of his forgiveness he offered Harold his kingdom.

So Harold became king and the magician his highest adviser, and they lived together in happiness ever after.

IX

THE MOSQUITO-PARTY

THE rain was pouring down steadily on the roof of the summer-cottage of the L—— School at the seashore, but the younger girls, who were playing on the screened porch which surrounded the bedrooms, did not mind the weather.

They were engaged in a wonderful play. Dressed up in long dresses belonging to the older girls, with trains sweeping after them and old veils and shawls thrown over their heads, they represented the royalties of Europe.

Each corner of the porch was a royal castle, and the queens of the different countries tried to outshine one another with splendor and pomp.

The Queen of France was just preparing to visit the Queen of Spain, when Mildred, one of the bigger girls, came out and said:

“You are all wrong, because France is a republic and has no queen.”

For a minute the juniors were confused, but Ferne, the Queen of France, after a minute, burst out:

“Oh, girls, we are all right; we are living a few hundred years ago.”

The game went on and the girls now gave themselves historical names, with the help of Mildred.

Marie Antoinette, the Queen of France, now visited Isabella, the Queen of Spain, while Queen Alexandra of Russia, was occupied in fixing the hair of Queen Elizabeth of England, in a more queenly way.

Numerous Ambassadors and Ladies of Honor carried messages from one residence to another, and at last it was arranged that all the royalties would meet in Italy to celebrate the birthday of Queen Ilona, of Italy.

It was on this occasion that Marie Antoinette, Queen of France, pushed the rocking-chair, representing her throne, which she was obliged to carry herself to Italy, against the screen and tore a little hole in it.

This upset all the royalties of Europe.

“It was your fault, Ruth,” Marie Antoinette, Queen of France, cried. “You pushed me.”

“No,” answered Ilona, the Queen of Italy, “you know that there is not room for two chairs in that corner.”

Isabella, the Queen of Spain, managed to

kneel down in spite of her sweeping train, and investigating the hole, she consolingly said:

“Now, you see, I pulled the hole together, it is so tiny that no mosquito would find it. I don’t think we even need to mention it to Miss Gray.”

This matter settled, the game went on, and the girls were so interested in it that they kept it up until evening. They were so used to call each other Queen or Highness that they fell asleep with those words on their lips and promised each other to continue the same game the next day.

The first word that was heard in the junior’s bedroom next morning was:

“I have a mosquito bite,” called out by fat little Vivian.

“I am all eaten up,” cried red-cheeked Anita.

“So am I,” echoed little Barbara from her corner.

Just then the teacher, Miss Gray, came in to call them, and now all the voices together cried out:

“There are mosquitoes in here, Miss Gray.”

Only skinny little Sylvia said joyfully:

“I have no bite.”

“Well,” said Miss Gray, “that certainly is strange. There were no mosquitoes in the house yesterday evening, because we hunted all over the house. Unless there is a hole in the porch-screen, I cannot see how they got in.”

Now the little girls looked at each other significantly and then Nancy came out with a very feeble voice:

“Miss Gray, there is a tiny little hole in the screen. It happened to me while we were playing yesterday, but it is so tiny that we thought the mosquitoes would never find it. That is why we did not tell you, as you want us to.”

“It was I that said we did not need to tell you,” said Ruth, to finish the confession.

“Now, children, there is nothing to be done but to keep your bites and not to complain about them. I will give no punishment for making the hole this time, because you confessed, but I trust you to be more careful next time, and tell me immediately if anything happens to the screen.” So said Miss Gray, and then she went on:

“Jump out of your beds as quickly as you can, and if you get dressed and do your work very swiftly, and not let me find anything to scold about, I will meet you at the porch at ten o’clock and tell you about the nice party the mosquitoes had last night in your bedroom.”

With an exclamation of joy the girls jumped out of their beds and hurried with their dressing.

After breakfast each one went to the work assigned for her, and one was always careful

to watch the other, that it should be done in the right way.

Never before had they done their work so quickly, and at ten o'clock they assembled on the porch, where Miss Gray soon joined them. First Miss Gray made sure that the girls had done their work well, then she made them sit in a half circle and while she was carefully mending the damaged screen, she began to tell this story:

Over there, where the shrubbery begins, lives a mosquito family. There is Mosquito Dad and Mammy and eight children.

There were nine, and Mrs. Mosquito always sighs when she thinks of her sweet little boy, who left her one morning, never to return.

What happened to him?

Oh, you know, the Mosquitoes have plenty of food, if they only would be content with honey-dew and berry-juice. But this is like ordinary food to them. It is the blood of human beings that they are longing for, just as children long for ice cream and candy.

But to fly on people and suck their blood is a very dangerous thing to do, and many of them get killed that way, especially children.

The oldest boy of Mrs. Mosquito had run away secretly with other boys in order to get a taste of the so much praised food, in spite of the warning of his parents, and had never come back.

That is why Mrs. Mosquito watches the other children so carefully, and having had the example of their brother, they really were better than other mosquito children.

Of course, they teased their father and mother every day and the father had promised, if they would be good children, he would take them sometimes to a party where they could get ice cream and candy, that means human blood,—as much as they wanted.

For weeks Mr. Mosquito had kept an eye on our cottage, and watched the happy, healthy children that went in and out, always thinking:

“To suck those little bodies while they are asleep would be a fine party for my children.”

But as carefully as he watched the house, he could never see an opening in the screen, and evenings through the window he had seen how the teachers hunted through the house and sprayed poison wherever they could see a little mosquito hide in a corner.

Yesterday, in spite of the rain, Mr. Mosquito kept around the porch and, by good chance, heard the rip in the screen which sounded like sweet music to his ears.

As soon as the dinner bell rang and the porch was empty, he investigated the little hole and found it big enough to squeeze

through, even for Mrs. Mosquito, who was rather stout.

Having made sure that there was no danger, he entered the little hole and looked around, first on the porch, and then he entered by the window, which he had noticed was never closed at night, into the children's bedroom.

There were twelve little beds, and Mr. Mosquito knew by his nightly excursions, when he used to peep through the window, that all of them were occupied.

"This hole in the screen certainly is a good chance, and as it will not be mended today, I shall at last be able to give my children the long-promised party," he said to himself.

Very joyfully he left the room and the porch by the same way he had entered, and went home.

Mrs. Mosquito just had her hands full with quieting the children, for rainy weather made them just crazy for a change of food.

Winkey had started all by complaining:

"Oh, Mother, when shall we at last have the party Daddy promised so long ago?"

"I am just tired of honey-dew and berry-juice all the time," cried out Blinkey, his sister.

"All the other children go out to parties with their parents and we never go," bawled Twinkey, a thin, long-legged youngster.

"I shall soon die if I have to wait much longer

for a little taste of human blood,” grumbled Minkey.

You see they could not go out on account of the rain, and they were just as cranky as other children are when they don’t know what to do with themselves.

At last Mr. Mosquito came home with a very joyful air about him. He asked Mrs. Mosquito if the children had been good.

This is a very promising question, for it is asked always when there is some surprise in store for them.

Consequently the children sat up in their best manner and behaved like angels.

The kind-hearted mother had not the heart to tell about them, and so the father said:

“If you will be very good during the day we will go to a party tonight.”

Now there was a great uproar. “Hurrah!” cried the boys, and the girls fell on father’s and mother’s neck and just bawled with joy and excitement.

“Where?” “When?” “How?” Those questions were asked by eight voices at once, and it was such a noise that the parents simply had to hold their ears.

At last when the voices that talked at the same time had dwindled down to three or four, the father began:

“You all know the L—-- School-Cottage, over there? Well, it happened today that the girls tore a tiny little hole in the screen of the porch, and they don’t think it worth while to report to the teacher, so it will not be mended today. To-night when all the sweet little girls are asleep, we will go and have a lovely time. You can have all the human blood you want for once in your life. But only if you behave, and not before I have given you a lesson in proper manners.”

The children sat up in their best way and listened attentively to the following instructions, given by their father:

“First of all,” he began, “there must be the right order from the beginning.

“We will have to wait until the light is out and the children are asleep.

“We will wait outside the window, and there must be perfect quietness, or else the children will notice us and all will be spoiled.

“To enter the little hole in the screen, we will have to go single file. I will be first, the children will follow according to their age, beginning with the oldest. Mother will come last, in order to keep watch over all.

“You are not supposed to push each other. There will be enough room and food for all of you.

“It is very bad manners to hum around peo-

ple's ears and, besides, it is very dangerous. If one of the children wakes up and arouses the others, our party is gone and our life, too, for the teacher would come at once after us with a poison-sprayer.

"For the same reason you must never pick out people's faces. Content yourself with neck, arms and legs, if you can get them.

"Always keep an eye on me and mother, so that we can warn you if we should be in danger."

After all these important instructions he left the children with the mother, reminding them to be very good for the rest of the day.

Now the preparations for the party began.

First of all they got a good washing, one by one, and mother was especially particular in regard to their hands and mouths.

"But why all this washing?" said Winkey, who did not like water. "The girls won't see us, anyhow, if they are asleep."

"But you don't want those nice little girls to get infections, do you? If you are dirty you will carry germs to them, and they would have to suffer," said the mother.

Now you should have seen how they scrubbed themselves, and when they had finished mother looked into their tiny little ears and brushed their cute little wings.

After this they were told to keep very quiet. Mother did not want to hear one unkind word, and whoever should soil himself would have to stay home from the party.

There never were better mosquito children in the world than those eight, yesterday afternoon.

But every five minutes one would ask:

“Mother, is it not time yet to start?” until mother got impatient and said:

“The one who asks me once more and can not wait quietly will stay home.”

After that, only whispering was heard, and the children went about on tiptoes.

At last it grew dark. Father, who had gone out to see if everything was all right in the school-cottage, came back and said everything was O. K.

Then Twinkey came out with a wish that had been in his heart the whole afternoon:

“Father,” he said, “you know my friend Smallwing, whose parents were killed not long ago. He never went to a party, and I know he would be too frightened to go alone. Couldn’t I ask him to come with us, since you told us there are twelve children and we are only ten altogether?”

One could see that the father was pleased with the kindness and thoughtfulness of his boy. He said:

"Yes, go and get him, but tell him to wash himself clean before he comes."

Now Blinkey, one of the little girls, said:

"Can I get my friend Sweetmouth, also?"

But the father stopped her right away.

"Nothing doing," he said. "There is only one child left, Sylvia, and she is such a restless child and never sleeps real soundly, that I don't want her to be touched. Maybe another time you can ask your friend, but not today."

Twinkey brought his timid little friend, and after he was carefully looked over by Mrs. Mosquito, the family was ready to start.

It was the first time that the children had gone so far from home, and they felt very excited.

There was light in the bedroom and the father took all the children to one window, where they could peep in by a small crack in the shade.

The children were just undressing, and as they were not allowed to talk in the bedroom, there was great quietness.

"Oh, look at that fat little girl in the second bed. I am going to taste her," whispered Minkey, who was the greediest of them all.

By good chance the father heard this remark, and he called Minkey and all the other children aside. He said:

"I hope you all have enough love and respect for your mother to see that she must have the

best bite. For weeks and weeks she has sacrificed all her pleasure to keep you out of danger. It is quite understood that mother will have the fat little girl in the second bed.

“And to prevent a mixup afterwards, I will assign a child to each of you right away.”

They went back to the window and Father Mosquito pointed out a girl for each of his children and, for the last time, reminded them to be quiet and obedient and never to forget their manners.

The children in the room were now all on their knees, offering a prayer to the Heavenly Father.

After they had finished, the light was put out.

The mosquito children found the time very long until their father at last found it safe to enter.

Very slowly and carefully, so that they could escape quickly when an alarm was raised, they entered the little hole, one by one.

The children and the mother had to wait on the porch until father had made sure that all the children were asleep. He went from one bed to the other and listened to the breathing.

Then he came back and, with one of his feelers on his mouth, as a sign of perfect silence, he allowed them to enter the bedroom.

Slowly each went to his assigned bed and the party began.

Never did real children enjoy a party more than those mosquito children did. Never did ice cream to real children taste better than the blood they sucked, to those tiny little mosquitoes.

You must remember, it was the first time in their life, and they had waited so long for this party.

They sucked and sucked until they really could hold no more, but, keeping their wise father's advice, they behaved so perfectly that none of the children woke up.

At last the mosquito father came to each bed to call the children together.

As slowly as when they had entered, they left the porch by the little hole, only it was much harder to get through, because their little bellies were so big now.

It was a real hard job for Mr. Mosquito to get Mrs. Mosquito through the hole, because, as I said before, she was a rather stout person.

When they got home they were just so tired that they did not even care to tell each other about the pleasure they had.

They just fell into their beds and slept.

But I know, right now, while I am telling you this story, they are having a grand time telling each other about you.

They may be looking longingly over here, but they would not dare to come near, for right this

morning they had to promise father and mother that they would not go out alone, but would wait patiently until the opportunity for another party would present itself.

"So that is how you entertained the mosquito-family last night." With these words Miss Gray rose, for the hole had been mended long ago.

But the girls held her back:

"Just one minute longer, Miss Gray, so that we may talk over the story," they said.

Fat little Ruth looked down on her bitten arm and said proudly:

"It was I who was chosen for the mother."

At that all the girls laughed.

Then Margaret said to skinny Sylvia:

"You did not entertain anybody last night, we all did."

But Sylvia only laughed and said:

"Oh, it's only a story!"

Margaret answered proudly:

"But we have the bites all the same."

"I wonder if I entertained the poor orphan-boy," said Grace, "my bites are so very small, as if the one that had tasted my blood had been timid."

And Charlotte said:

"Oh, Miss Gray, why did you close up the hole? I wouldn't have minded entertaining the family again. I don't mind a drop of blood."

“Now, my dear children,” said Miss Gray, “don’t you get the wrong idea. I told you that Mrs. Mosquito was very particular that her children should be clean, for she did not want them to infect you healthy little girls. There are only very few mosquitoes that have such good sense. All the others are not so clean, and to be bitten by them is very dangerous.

“Our family is all right, they had their party and they will find another chance some time.

“What I want you to do is to keep the doors closed and report to me at once if there is a hole in the screen.”

Miss Gray now left the children, and they went outside to play, for it was a wonderful morning.

There was a good thing in that little story: the girls didn’t fuss any more about every bite they got.

They spent a long time musing over the thought that they had entertained one of the little mosquito children.

As little Vivian put it:

“We must not be stingy, we like goodies, so why should we not allow others to have them, too?”

X

PRINCESS ROSE

ONCE upon a time there lived in fairy-land a kind and beautiful fairy, whose name was Flowerlove. She had a great castle, and in her garden grew the most wonderful flowers.

There were daffodils and lilies and tulips and crocuses of such shapes and colors that never could be found in other countries, and above all there were roses that excelled in beauty every kind that we can imagine.

Fairy Flowerlove sometimes went into the land of Mankind. Those visits were a source of joy for rich and poor, for wherever she went she used her magic power to give favors. She was a very welcome guest, even in the palaces of kings.

But in fairy-land there also lived a wicked magician whose name was Poisonhead. He was just as wicked as the fairy was kind. He had a big castle and a garden, too, but in it there grew nothing but poisonous plants, and whenever he went into the land of Mankind he took poison with him and his road was marked with evil and distress.

Not far from the magician lived his old mother, the bat-witch. She lived in a little hut with many bats, who even clung to her dresses and in her hair. The bat-witch was too old to go into the land of Mankind, but she was very mean, too.

Everybody can understand that the kind and good fairy was not loved by her wicked neighbors, and the magician and the witch thought incessantly of ways to anger and harm fairy Flowerlove.

Once the fairy Flowerlove went into the land of Mankind and was invited to supper in the castle of the king of the Northland. While they were sitting at the supper table the king said:

“Dear Fairy, could you not help me to find a Princess to be my wife?”

The fairy answered:

“Tell me the qualities you would appreciate most in your future wife, so that I may choose according to your taste.”

The king of the Northland did not take much time to think about the qualities of the future queen, but answered:

“Above all, she must be very beautiful.”

The fairy promised to send a bride according to his wish on the following day. When she arrived home she went right into her garden and chose among her flowers the most beau-

tiful, a dark-red rose. She touched the rose with her magic wand, and instantly the rose was transformed into a beautiful princess.

A picture of loveliness, Princess Rose stood before the fairy, who said:

“Dear Princess, I have selected you to be the bride of my dear friend the king of the Northland. As the way is rather long, I will change one flower of this garden into a servant for you, and you yourself can choose which one you like best.”

Princess Rose pointed to a little daisy that bloomed right at her feet, and said:

“This little daisy has been blooming at my feet for years, and I would be glad to have it for my servant.”

Instantly the daisy was changed into a strong, good-looking maid, who bowed first before the fairy and then before the princess, and said:

“I am so glad I have been chosen to follow the princess, for I would have felt so lonely without my beautiful protectress, and I will serve her as best I can.”

The two girls went with the fairy to the castle, where they stayed over night, and the next morning they prepared for their journey.

When they were standing before the fairy to bid her good-bye, the fairy said:

“Your journey is not so easy as you think. It

leads through the land of my two enemies, the magician Poisonhead and the bat-witch. If they knew about your journey they would try all they could to lead you into danger. But as long as you do not leave the broad highway nothing can happen to you."

These words of the fairy made Daisy rather fearful, and when the girls had hardly started on their way, Daisy came back to the fairy and said:

"Dear fairy, I am so afraid we will get into trouble. Could you not give me a little magic stick that would help us when we are in need?"

The fairy gave Daisy a little branch, saying:

"If you hold this branch in your right hand and call my name, I will hear your wish and grant it, wherever you may be. But only once the power will help you, therefore be very careful."

Daisy thanked the kind fairy and promised to take good care of the little branch, and with great joy they started on their way.

The world was new to the two girls who, until now, had only led flower lives. Everybody can imagine how they enjoyed everything that they saw, and how they looked forward to the splendid life in the king of the Northland's castle.

Talking and laughing, they went along the road, happy as happy could be.

But when the sun got higher and higher and it grew hot, the Princess began to complain:

“Why didn’t the king of the Northland send a carriage? It is so hot and I am so tired.”



AS SOON AS SHE HAD SAID THESE WORDS, THERE CAME A GOLDEN
CARRIAGE ALONG THE ROAD.

As soon as she had said these words, there came a golden carriage along the road, drawn by four white horses, and stopped right before the girls.

A servant in a splendid livery descended

from his high seat and opened the door with a deep bow.

The Princess wanted to step in right away, but Daisy tried to keep her back.

"Please," she whispered, "let us walk. It may be a snare."

But the Princess answered:

"Can't you see it is a royal carriage; who would send it except the king of the Northland?"

"The fairy said we must not leave the highway," whispered Daisy again.

"But we are on the highway now. The fairy could not know that this carriage would come to meet us, otherwise she would have told us to use it," said the Princess.

And in she stepped, and Daisy had to follow. As soon as the girls were seated, the carriage started off at such a speed that the girls were unable to see if they were still on the right road or not.

At last it stopped before a big castle and, believing it was the castle of the king of the Northland, the girls went in.

As the door closed behind them, they saw at once that they were not at the king of the Northland's palace. They were in the castle of the magician Poisonhead. For all around the room stood poisonous plants in strange shapes and glaring colors.

The horror they felt after this discovery nearly took away their breath, and before they had recovered the magician came in.

He was an ugly old man with a long, white beard falling down to his chest. Out of his eyes shone meanness as he said:

"Isn't it nice of the fairy Flowerlove to send me such a beautiful bride? Tomorrow we will have our wedding."

Both girls sank on their knees and prayed:

"Please let us go away; we want to go to the king of the Northland."

"It would be very foolish for me to let such a sweet bride go away," said the magician. "The fairy would not send me another one. No, you will get your supper and go to bed, and tomorrow will be our wedding day."

Further pleading was useless. Their lamentation and tears raised no pity in the magician's heart. When he left, the girls stayed alone behind closed doors, and the Princess had plenty of time to repent her foolish deed.

Supper was brought to the girls, but they could not eat. They went to bed, but they could not sleep.

The Princess cried the whole night and Daisy racked her brain how she might save the Princess. At last she hit upon a plan. She said to the Princess:

“Dear Princess, cry no more. Wash your face that the signs of tears may disappear, and try to sleep. Tomorrow morning, when the magician comes, show him a smiling, happy face and ask for permission to go out into the garden and gather some flowers. If he lets us go, I will try to find a way of escape.”

The Princess did as she was told, and when the magician came in next morning, she smiled and said:

“Dear magician, if we can not change our fate, we may as well take it in good grace. If I have to be your bride, I would like to adorn my dress with flowers out of your garden. May I and my maid go out and gather what we like best?”

An expression of scorn and mockery lay in the magician’s face when he answered:

“Oh, yes, you can go. I have no fear that you will escape, as a high wall borders the garden and all doors are locked.”

With beating hearts the girls went into the garden and Daisy guided the Princess to a place near the garden wall, and, holding the magic branch in her hand, she said:

“Oh, Fairy, by thy magic power,
Change us to beetle and healing flower.”

The same instant the Princess was changed

into a healing plant and Daisy into a tiny little beetle that sat in the red flower.

It was just in the nick of time, for the magician came out of the house and walked right up the garden path. And when he saw the healing plant in his garden, he pulled it out and threw it, together with the beetle, over the garden wall.

Then he went over to the other side of the garden to look for the Princess, but could not find her.

On the other side of the garden wall, flower and beetle were changed again into the Princess and the servant, and both girls ran as quickly as they could until they reached the broad highway, where they knew they were safe.

Here the Princess thanked Daisy for her help, and the girls walked on until evening came. As they could not reach the land of Mankind before nightfall, they prepared to stay over night at the roadside.

But when it grew dark, the Princess complained again:

"Why haven't we a roof over our head and a bed to sleep in? I am so tired and so afraid."

"Please, dear Princess, do not complain," prayed Daisy. "You will bring us into more trouble."

No sooner had she finished these words than

there came a trim young farmer's wife along the road and said to the girls:

"Why, such beautiful girls can not stay at the roadside over night. Come into my little house with me. It is right behind those trees. I will give you a good supper and a nice, clean bed to sleep in."

The Princess was ready to go right away, but Daisy prayed:

"Oh, Princess, let us stay here; it may be another snare."

The Princess said:

"I can't see any danger. The woman looks so friendly; she means it well."

"But you know we should not leave the road," argued Daisy.

"The house is not two hundred steps off," answered the Princess. "We do not leave the road out of sight, and I am longing so for a soft bed." And the Princess went, and Daisy had to follow.

They entered a nice, clean farmhouse, where they got a good supper and went to bed, and the Princess went to sleep right away.

But Daisy could find no sleep for a long time. When, at last, she did fall asleep she had such ugly dreams. And when she awoke she thought she must be in a dream still, for she was not in the nice, clean farmhouse; she was in the hut of

the bat-witch and the bed of the Princess was empty.

Before she had recovered from her surprise the door opened and the old witch came in.

She was so ugly that Daisy shuddered when she looked at her. Gray hair was falling in strings over her face, and big, yellow teeth stuck out of her mouth. All over her dirty dress bats spread their black wings, and one was even sitting on her head.

With an ugly laugh she began:

“And if my son, Poisonhead, can not have the Princess, nobody shall have her. In what way I have changed her, nobody shall ever know, and she can not be released until she is brought in her present form into the presence of the king in his most splendid room. You, Daisy, are my servant. You have to clean the house, but you are not allowed to touch the bats.”

Oh, what a hard time now began for poor Daisy. She heard nothing but scolding and screaming the whole day long, for she never could please her mistress.

But harder to bear than her own trouble was her sorrow for the Princess, as Daisy did not even know into what form she was changed.

Many a night she cried, out of loneliness and sympathy for her dear mistress, who had disappeared so mysteriously, and only the hope of

finding out about her existence made her life endurable.

At last, one morning, while she was cleaning the back yard, she saw the old witch coming out of the house and stepping on a big, old stone that was lying near the door, with an expression of hatred on her face.

And now Daisy knew the Princess was changed into this old, ugly stone! Of course, she hid her discovery until she found an opportunity to make use of it.

One day the witch said to Daisy:

"I am going to visit my son, Poisonhead, to-day, and will not be back before night. You must watch the house, and God pity you if I don't find everything in order when I return!"

As soon as the witch was out of sight, Daisy dug the stone out of the ground and went away with it.

As the stone was very heavy, Daisy could only walk slowly, and she was so afraid she would not reach the border of the land of Mankind before the witch returned.

But at last, when it was nearly evening, she reached the border, right near the castle of the king of the Northland. She hid the stone behind a bush, went into the castle and asked for a position as a servant. And because she was a strong, good-looking girl they kept her as a

kitchenmaid, and she got a little room to sleep in.

When it was night, Daisy went out and brought the stone into her room.

Now her whole heart was set on finding out the situation of the king's most splendid room. It was not so easy, because her work was in the kitchen. And hard work it was, too. But Daisy did not mind for the hope of releasing the Princess made everything pleasant and easy.

At last, one night, when everybody was asleep, she took the stone and carried it carefully up the stairs with the intention of placing it in the king's most splendid room. She hoped that when the king entered, next morning, her great hope would be realized.

But the stone was so heavy and the stairs were dark, and when Daisy nearly had reached the top, the stone slipped out of her arm and fell down the stairs with a great crash. All the servants came running along to see what had happened.

If it had not been for the stone, they would have taken Daisy for a thief, for what had she to do in the king's most splendid rooms? But, as everybody knew that a thief would not carry a big stone, they took her for a fool and let her go.

Daisy was so sad when she had to carry the stone back to her room again, and she racked

her brain day and night to find a new way to place the stone in the king's best room.

At last she had an idea.

She went out to gather willow-twigs and made a basket out of them, just big enough to place the stone in.

On the top of the stone she put good garden soil, and in the soil she planted beautiful red flowers.

In a few weeks she had a beautiful flower basket. Just about that time the king celebrated his birthday, and Daisy asked for permission to give the basket as a present to the king.

Because it was such a wonderful piece she got permission. The evening before the great day she carried the basket with the stone into the king's most splendid room and hid herself behind a curtain.

The whole night she stood there, her heart filled with fear and hope. So far she had succeeded in her efforts; would her dearest wish be realized at last? Would the awful trials of the journey at last wind up with a cheerful wedding? These were the thoughts that occupied her mind as the hours went by.

At last, next morning, the king came to see all his birthday gifts, and when he stepped over the threshold there stood Princess Rose in the basket.

The king was very much surprised, and said:

“Dear Princess, where have you been? I have waited for you so long.”

But the Princess stood there, blushing with happiness, and could not answer, because she did not know herself where she had been.

Now Daisy came out from behind the curtain and told everything that had happened, and how at last she had succeeded in saving the Princess.

The King and the Princess were so delighted that the Princess said:

“Dear Daisy, you have been the most faithful and unselfish of servants. You shall stay with me always, not as my servant, but as my dearest friend.

“As for myself,” the Princess went on, “I have well deserved the trials I had to go through. I was a vain, thoughtless girl when I left the fairy, but those experiences have changed me. I will never forget the lesson I learned, and so the hardships of the journey will be a blessing after all.”

The wedding was now prepared in haste. Fairy Flowerlove was one of the guests, and enjoyed greatly the happiness of the young people.

Daisy stayed with the King and the Queen all her life and was greatly honored, and they all lived happy ever after.

XI

THE CLOUD-PALACE OF THE DREAM-ANGEL

LITTLE Grace lay in her white bed in the beautiful hospital. She had been very ill, but now the doctors and nurses felt she was on the way to health again. But she was very weak and tired and at that they looked grave.

“If she could only get something to rouse her and win back her strength,” they said.

Nobody saw a beautiful spirit who came that night from the Dream-palace in the air. She laid a bit of many-colored gauze on Grace’s eyes and was gone.

“She is sleeping more restfully,” the night-nurse said as she made the rounds. She could not see the gift of the Dream-angel on Grace’s eyes.

In the dream, little Grace was lifted high up in the air until she came to a beautiful palace in the clouds.

It was the palace of the dream-angels, but why it was so called Grace did not know, and the angels who welcomed her did not tell.

Grace was given a pair of wings and immediately took her first lesson in flying. She learned it very quickly, and then she flew out with other angels to see some of the interesting places near the cloud-palace.

There was the big barn, where all the little cloud sheep are kept when the shepherd, the wind, does not drive them out all over the sky; and many other things which I know would interest all children.

But then the little angels said:

“We have to go home now, our sisters will come soon; but you can go on alone, nothing can happen to you.”

So the angels flew back, and Grace went on all alone, and soon she came to a very strange place.

There stood a little golden loom, surrounded by a golden fence, and on a table nearby spindles with very fine thread, just as fine as spiderweb, and in all imaginable colors.

There was also a little box with black beads, and a pair of golden scissors was hanging on the railing.

Little Grace could not imagine what all this meant. After she had waited a little while there came a big angel whom Grace had not seen before.

The big angel did not notice Grace, but sat

down on a golden chair and began to weave. She wove a very fine veil-tissue of many colors, and sometimes she stopped a little while to think or to look into one of the many big books that were standing in line on the fence.

Grace had observed this with great interest, and at last she took courage and asked the big angel:

“Dear Angel, please tell me what all this means.”

“With pleasure, little Grace, I am the Dream-angel and weave dreams. All that the people on earth are going to see tonight in their dreams, I am weaving in this veil-tissue. Soon my little helpers will come. They cut the little veils, carry them down to the earth at night and put them on people’s eyes. They will see in their dreams all that is woven in the veils.”

“But, dear Angel, all those books, what are they for?” asked Grace.

“In those books everything is written about all people whether they are good or bad, and what their hopes and fears are. Good people can see their wishes realized in dreams, and bad people sometimes receive a warning in a dream.”

“And the black beads?” Grace wanted to know.

“If I weave black beads into a dream, then it will be very sad. But did you see the big palace,

where all the Dream-angels live, and did you meet our little sisters who keep house?"

"Oh, yes," said Grace, "I received my wings there, but I really did not know why it is called the Palace of the Dream-angels."

"You see," went on the Dream-angel, "this is our workshop, but when the work is done we go into the palace to rest. Here are my helpers now; you can watch them."

A multitude of little angels now came, and each one was called separately to the Dream-angel and told to her all that it had seen in its nightly flight to the earth. After some of the news had been noted in the big books, they began to cut the veil-tissue into little pieces just big enough to cover the eyes, and then they sorted them and arranged them into little piles, for each angel had a special place to supply.

The big Dream-angel wove, another cut, the others sorted, and so it did not take long until all the work was done.

One angel after the other left, and at last Grace and the big angel were alone again.

"Dear Angel," asked Grace, "could I not become one of your helpers?"

"Yes, my dear, you can, after you have finished your earthly pilgrimage."

"Could I not go tonight and bring dreams to my little companions in the hospital?"

“Because you endured your sufferings so bravely and patiently, we invited you to come to the dream-palace for a night, but if you would rather carry dreams to your friends, we will let you have your wish. Tell me about your little friends and I will weave the dreams.”

“In the hospital, in the bed beside the one that is mine, lies little Henry. For two years now he has been there. He wishes so much to be well and healthy. Dear Angel, if he can not be healthy in reality, let him be happy in his dream and run and play like healthy children.”

Immediately the angel began to weave, and when Grace looked through the veil she saw the little boy running after butterflies, saw him playing with other children, and his face was round and rosy and his eyes bright with joy.

“Oh, how lovely!” cried Grace, and clapped her little hands.

“Now go on, dear child,” reminded the Angel.

“There is another boy in the same room. His name is Robert. On the table beside his bed are piles of books, all descriptions of foreign countries. He is always talking about the travels to foreign continents he will make when he gets well. It will take long before he can do it, and therefore, please let him travel to foreign lands in a dream.”

After a short time, when Grace looked

through the veil, she saw the sea with great ships, the desert with its pyramids and camels, with animals and strange flowers and much more that would cheer the heart of an explorer.

After Grace had expressed her joy, she went on:

“There is also a girl in my sickroom, whose name is Ferne. She is very ill, and I believe that she soon will go to heaven. But Ferne does not know how beautiful it is there, and so she is frightened and does not want to die. If she only knew to what a lovely place she will go, and how blessed a life she can look forward to, she would spend her last days on earth in peace and joy instead of fear and sorrow. Could you not show her, in a dream, how beautiful a place heaven is?”

The Dream-angel began to weave, and soon Grace held the finished veil in her hand, and looked through.

“Oh, dear Dream-angel!” Grace exclaimed, “this is really wonderful. And to think that I can take these veils down to my friends myself! Thank you, so much.”

Accompanied by another angel who knew the way, she went to the hospital. It was rather a queer feeling when she stood in the room where she had suffered so much. To her eyes her own little bed seemed empty.

All her little companions slept. Grace went

from one little bed to the other and then she put the first veil on Henry's eyes and watched his face. She could see how happy he was; he laughed out loud in his dream and his thin face shone with joy.

After his veil had disappeared, as it always does when the dream is over, she went to Robert's bed.

It was such a joy to Grace to notice the great change that the dream brought to Robert's face. She really could see him shooting lions, rowing and fighting. Robert had the time of his life in his dream; that was plain.

But little Ferne's dream had the greatest effect of all.

Her face had had a sad and hopeless expression all the time, but after the dream it became calm and peaceful, so that she already looked like an angel.

When all the veils had disappeared, Grace returned to the Dream-palace and told the Dream-angel all about her excursion, and enjoyed a few hours of recreation with the angels.

But then it was time for her to return to the earth. She thanked the angels for all the pleasure she had had and then—she awoke.

It was bright morning. Doctors and nurses were standing around her bed and found Grace much better than the night before.

Henry and Robert were laughing, and there was such a bright smile on Ferne's face, and her eyes looked so happily up through the window to the blue of heaven, that Grace was sure the gift of the Dream-angel had wrought the change.

She was still too weak to talk to her companions, but there was a happy smile on her face. She soon became well, but the memory of her visit to the cloud-palace of the Dream-angels lasted all her life.

XII

THE SEA-QUEEN'S REVENGE

MANY, many years ago there stood on a lonely seashore a little house which belonged to the fisherman Hanson and his son George. The city was many miles away, and only very seldom did the fisherman go there to sell his dried fish and buy food and clothes, or whatever he needed for his household.

But even though the fisherman and his son lived such a lonesome life, they were very happy, for they loved the sea which gave them a living and which they regarded as a dear friend.

While the father liked the sea best in her quiet mood, the son found it most beautiful when the storm piled the water in high waves which broke with a great roar on the rocky shore.

It was on those stormy days that the son, a strong lad of fifteen years of age, liked to go out in the boat, to try his strength against wind and water.

But the father would say:

“Do not go; you know that in these stormy days the sea-queen goes out hunting and what-

ever comes into her way, be it a giant steamer or a little boat, she carries it all to the bottom of the sea."

"Oh, father," said the son, "she would not harm us, she knows that we are her friends."

It really seemed as if George was right, for he always returned safe and happy from those dangerous excursions.

One day when George had gone out during a great storm, he did not return. Sorrowful hours passed for the old father, and when he was sure that his son had become a victim of the hunting sea-queen, he went out on the shore and called into the roaring wave:

"Sea-queen, thou hast ruined my son. Why did'st thou encourage him by thy favor? Now I have lost my only help and joy!"

There came a wave higher than all the others, and on the white foam rode the sea-queen with a golden crown on her head, on which the water-drops glittered like diamonds, and through the roaring storm her voice was heard:

"Too often has thy son's behavior provoked my anger. The punishment had to come. But to show thee how I appreciate thy friendship, he shall not die. In three different forms he will approach thee, and if thou recognizest him, he shall be saved."

The sea-queen vanished and the fisherman

went back to his house, which now seemed to him cold and empty.

His only consolation was the thought that he would recognize his son, and he watched carefully everything in his surroundings.

While he lay sleepless on his bed the first night after his son's misfortune, trying to overcome the feeling of loneliness, a wave came and knocked on the pillar of his house. The fisherman was surprised because it was very seldom that the water came up so far.

Next day the fisherman had no other thought than to find his son, but he could not see anything that seemed at all like the form his son might have assumed. At night when he again lay sleepless in his bed, the wave knocked a second time on the pillar, and it came again the third night.

Fisherman Hanson had become so used to the wave that he was very much surprised when it did not come the fourth night. As he lay waiting for the familiar knock, hour by hour, the thought came to his mind that the wave had been his son.

He had appeared three times in the form of the wave and the father had not recognized him.

It was a great grief for the old man, but he found his consolation in the promise of the sea-queen that his son would appear in three different forms.

More attentive than ever, the fisherman next day looked on the ground and in the air, but he could see nothing unusual. A big starfish was lying on the sand. It would have died had not Fisherman Hanson carried it back to the water.

It was not unusual that he should find a big starfish the next day, and again he carried it into the water.

But the third day when he was going along the seashore, something seemed to be missing, and the fisherman remembered the starfish, and all of a sudden it came to his mind that the starfish had been his son.

Oh, what a shock for the old man. He would have felt desperate had he not been sure that he would have another chance.

It happened that when he went out fishing on one of the following days, he caught an oyster containing a beautiful pearl. To find a pearl is great luck for a fisherman, for he gets more money for it than for a whole wagon of fishes, and this pearl, because of its size and unusual beauty, meant a fortune.

Fisherman Hanson enjoyed his find very much, but although he was searching all the time to find his son, it never occurred to him to suspect his son in the form of the pearl.

He kept the pearl in the drawer of his table and every day, when he came home from his

work, the first thing for him to do was to open the drawer and look at the pearl.

He really got attached to it, and he would not think of parting with it.

Meanwhile he was always looking for his son, and he felt very sad that he had not been able to discover him.

Sometimes he suspected his son in a fish, in a stone, even in a cloud, but he never was sure, and as this was his last guess, he could not make up his mind to take the chance.

His son had been to him not only his only joy, but he had seen in him also a provider for his old age.

The grief made him feel older than he really was and he thought that he would have to sell the pearl and put the money in the bank, so that he would be provided for if something should happen to him and he could do his work no more.

As the time went on and he did not find his son, the thought of selling the pearl came to his mind more often, and he decided to do so on his next trip to the town.

It was very hard for him to give up the only joy he had left, but on the day of his journey he put the pearl into his pocket with a heavy sigh.

When he came to town he sold first all his dried fish and then went to a pearl shop.

By good chance he found there a rich pearl

merchant coming from a country far over the sea to buy pearls.

When he saw Fisherman Hanson's pearl he was delighted with its size and unusual beauty and offered a price that surpassed even the fisherman's highest expectation.

Reason told Fisherman Hanson that this was the best chance he ever would get, and that the only thing to do was to sell the pearl. But his heart protested. He was so attached to this beautiful pearl, and it was only after a hard struggle, when he pictured himself as old and unable to work, that he could give up his treasure.

He received a big purse of money for it, but the bargain that would have delighted any fisherman did not bring joy to his heart.

He would have gladly given all his riches for the assurance that he would see his son again.

When he arrived home, his house appeared to him more lonely than ever. There was a heavy burden on his heart when he looked into the empty drawer, and all of a sudden, like a flash of lightning, the thought came to his mind:

"The pearl is my son."

He cursed his blindness, but then he ran out to the sea and called to the waves:

"Sea-queen, the pearl is my son."

Out of the deep there came a voice:

"He is released."

Fisherman Hanson now hurried to the town, but he was told that the ship on which the merchant sailed to a foreign country was on its way far out in the ocean.

The fisherman returned to his house determined to wait patiently until his son should come home. It was a great relief to him to know that his son now was a human being again, and he knew George well enough to know that he would hurry to his old father as quickly as possible.

Meanwhile the ship on which the merchant sailed was out on the high sea, and the pearl, as the merchant believed, was in the trunk in his cabin.

Already on the second day of the voyage, a sailer noticed a young lad he had not seen before, coming out of the cabin which was occupied by the pearl-merchant.

It was thought that he was a stowaway, and as the boy was strong and willing to work, they did not ask many questions. It was not the first time that a sailor had begun his career in this way.

Everyone will guess that the boy was George, released by the power of the sea-queen from his existence as a pearl.

George did not know how he had come on the ship, nor how much time had passed since the

stormy night, the last event he could recall. His heart was set on going home to his father as quickly as possible, for he was very sure that his father was in sorrow over his loss.

He had in mind to take a homeward bound ship as soon as they reached the foreign harbor and work his way back.

Meanwhile he kept much to himself, and seldom talked to his fellow-workers, but was liked for his quiet, gentle ways and the good work he did.

The coast of the foreign country was already in sight when the merchant missed his valuable pearl. When all searching proved useless he appealed to the captain, for he thought the pearl must have been stolen.

A great search was undertaken on the ship, but without success, and all would have been well for George, had not one of the sailors remembered that the first time he had seen George he had come from the merchant's cabin.

George was called for a hearing, and as soon as he had told his name and whose son he was, the merchant cried:

"He is the thief. I bought the pearl from his father and he has sent his son to steal it back."

Now it was against George that he could give no reason for his travel and that he had come on the ship unseen.

As he could not defend himself properly, he was declared guilty, bound, and put into a lonely cabin to stay there as a prisoner until the ship reached harbor.

George knew nothing about the pearl; he felt himself innocent. His only thought was to go home to his father as soon as possible. As he now lay prisoner, with a sad outlook of dishonor before him and no possibility of defending himself, he made a resolution to escape.

The ship was near the harbor. George being stronger than the others had expected, broke his chains and in an unguarded moment jumped into the sea. Only such an accomplished swimmer as he was could venture to carry out this enterprise successfully.

He reached the harbor near the landing station in safety.

It was not hard for him to find work on a ship that sailed back to his homeland, and he could hardly wait for the time to come when he should be united with his old father again.

But the merchant, when he discovered George's escape, had taken steps to recapture the thief. By cable he had sent messages to the town near George's home and had asked them to catch the thief as soon as he should set foot on land.

After a journey which seemed very long for a loving son who knew his father to be in distress,

the ship reached, at last, the harbor next to his home.

But no sooner had George set foot on land than he was caught and put into prison, to wait there until his trial for pearl stealing.

Old Fisherman Hanson had no idea of all these happenings, and it was by pure chance that he came to town just on the day when his son was to be tried.

He was coming along the road, deep in thought about his unhappy son whose return he was patiently awaiting, when an acquaintance called to him:

“Fisherman Hanson, have you come to the trial of your son?”

The old man thought he was dreaming, but when he heard about the pearl-robbery, he knew all that had happened, and he hurried to the court-house.

It was high time, for on account of his vague answers, George was again believed guilty.

A great uproar arose when the old man pushed his way into the court-house through all the many people that had come to the hearing.

From the door of the hall his call reached the judges:

“Hear me, please! my son is not guilty.”

There was a touching scene of greeting between father and son before the old man started

his story. The people did not want to believe it, but when the fisherman brought the money he had received for the pearl, they all rejoiced with him over the happy outcome.

George was set free, and in great joy father and son returned to their home. They were happy ever after, and George was now more careful and never forgot the lesson the sea-queen had taught him.

XIII

AUNT ANNA'S FAVORITE STORY

IT was on a wonderful May morning that a young gardener traveled along the road, with a song on his lips and joy and happiness shining out of his eyes.

Should he not be happy? Among a hundred others he had been selected to take care of the garden of an exceedingly rich lady.

This garden was said to be the most wonderful in the whole country. Everybody talked about it, and even kings and queens came to see it.

There was not a single common flower to be found in it. The garden and the hot-houses contained only cultivated flowers of unusual beauty.

The gardener was on his way to enter this position, and because of his love for nature and the wonderful springtime, he had decided to walk all the way to his destination.

While he walked, the gardener's eyes rested with such a loving expression on all the lovely wild flowers he passed, for he knew that he would not see any of them for a long time.

When he felt hungry he sat down by a silvery



SCENE FROM "AUNT ANNA'S FAVORITE STORY"

brook by the roadside and ate the lunch he had brought with him in his traveling-bag.

Looking around, he saw, right by his side, a bunch of forget-me-nots, the sweet flowers looking at him like loving blue eyes.

"Oh, you dear Forget-me-not," exclaimed the gardener, "do you know that you are the flower I like most in all the world? It is such a pity that I cannot take you with me and enjoy your loveliness every day. It would be such a comfort for me to have you near."

"But why can you not take me with you if you love me?" asked little Forget-me-not in a timid voice. "I would love to come."

"Oh, no, my dear little friend," said the gardener, "the garden where I am going to work belongs to a very rich lady, and she does not allow common flowers to grow in her garden. I would have to hide you in a dark corner where nobody could see you, and I would not do that. You are used to sunshine and joyful companions. You could not have them there."

"But really, dear Gardener," said Forget-me-not, "if you would like to have me near you, I would not mind being in a dark corner, and would not miss my companions. It would make me happy to be a joy to you."

"No, my little blue-eyed friend," said the gardener, "the big flowers that grow in the gar-

den would laugh and sneer at you. I would not like to see you unhappy."

"Dear Gardener," said Forget-me-not, "if you would like to have me, I would not mind the other flowers. I would love to come with you, if you really care for such a simple little thing as I am. Please take me, if I can bring comfort to you."

"You dear little flower," said the gardener, "your unselfishness is quite touching. I will take you with me then, and if you get homesick I will bring you back to this place if I have to walk all night. I will find you a nice hidden place in the garden for you and come every day to see you."

Very carefully he dug the plant out of the ground, without hurting one single root.

Then he put wet soil around her and wrapped her carefully in a cloth that he always carried with him for that purpose.

"Don't get lonely in that dark place, darling," he said, as he put her in his traveling-bag. "As soon as we arrive I will plant you."

The young man, now continuing on his journey, enjoyed the beautiful day with a happy heart.

All at once his eye was arrested by a lovely picture. A wild honey-suckle stood there on the meadow, a proud plant with many sweet pink flowers.

Sitting down for a rest near the honey-suckle,

he was amused to notice the haughty way in which she treated her many admirers, the bees and the butterflies, who swarmed around her.

They all hummed sweet words of love and admiration in her ears and a little mockingbird sang her praise in his sweetest tones.

"Honey-suckle," said the gardener, laughing, "watching you, one can easily see to what a noble family you belong. Why, your most magnificent relations could not put on haughtier airs than you do."

"Oh, do I belong to a noble family? Have I rich relatives?" asked Honey-suckle, very much interested. "Please tell me about them. Where do they live? What is their name? Can I not go to see them?"

"Your noble relatives are many, my dear Honey-suckle," explained the gardener, "but the most distinguished of all are the cultivated Azalea, the Laurel and the Rhododendron. They are too delicate to live in the fresh air; they live in hot-houses."

"What is a hot-house?" interrupted Honey-suckle.

"The hot-house is a house made out of glass. The air in it is warm; cold air would kill those delicate flowers."

"What are they like, my relatives?" inquired Honey-suckle.

“Azalea has the most wonderful flowers you can imagine, unusually large, the petals soft like velvet and of exquisite colors. The fragrance is simply wonderful. Some specimens are so rare that only very rich people can afford to have them. They decorate the tables of kings. The laurel crowns the heads of great heroes, and rhododendron does not stand behind the other two in beauty and distinction.”

Honey-suckle stretched her head still higher up in the air and looked triumphantly around, to see what impression this news made on her admirers.

The mockingbird had stopped singing in order to listen, and the bees and the butterflies did the same thing. It was evident that they all were greatly impressed by the story of the gardener.

“Dear Gardener,” asked Honey-suckle, “do you know where I can find those relatives of mine?”

“Oh, there will be many of them in the beautiful garden which I am going to take care of,” said the young man.

“Dear Gardener, please take me with you,” asked Honey-suckle, to the great consternation of her friends.

“Oh, no, Honey-suckle,” said the gardener. “Get this idea out of your head. You could not live in a hot-house and, besides, you don’t want to leave all your admirers behind.”

“Oh, I don’t care for these old bees and butterflies,” Honey-suckle said, “they only bore me. But I would like to make the acquaintance of my noble relatives. Please, dear Gardener, take me with you.”

“No,” said the gardener, “I know you could not stand the hot air. You would ask me to bring you back and I would not have the time to do it. You are all right here in the beautiful sunshine in the cool air; you could not live in a hot-house.”

Now, if Honey-suckle had been a reasonable flower, she would have given up the idea. But she was not. Those noble relatives had turned her head altogether. Besides, in her inner mind she thought:

“Who knows, maybe in the hot-house I will grow more beautiful myself, if we are from the same family; why should I not become as beautiful as my cousin Azalea?”

So she begged and prayed the gardener to take her.

She promised:

“I will never ask you to take me back, even if I am not happy. I should love to meet my cousins.”

At last the gardener said:

“Well, if you insist I will take you, but don’t blame me if you are not happy.”

The bees and the butterflies begged her to stay

with them, they felt really sorry to lose their sweet companion, but she would not listen.

The gardener very carefully loosened all her little roots from the ground. Honey-suckle was all excited with happiness and expectation. Hardly did she say "good-bye" to all her friends.

The mockingbird told her before she was put in the wet cloth beside the little Forget-me-not:

"I will come and see you in a few days, little Honey-suckle; keep an eye on the window of your glass-palace."

When Honey-suckle was put into the cloth, she was a little indignant to find another flower there already.

Little Forget-me-not very obligingly made room for her and greeted her with a friendly smile.

When they were placed in the traveling-bag, Honey-suckle measured Forget-me-not with a haughty look and said:

"Why, little one, where are you going to? You are not going to visit noble relatives living in a glass-palace, as I am?"

"No," said Forget-me-not, "the gardener is going to plant me in a hidden corner of his beautiful garden because he likes to look at me, and I am very happy about the thought,—to be loved. He promised to come and see me every day, and that is all I want."

"Poor thing," said Honey-suckle. "What an awful future, to live in a hidden corner, just for the sake of a friendly look. You would have been better off if you had stayed where you were."

"What are you going to do in the beautiful garden?" asked Forget-me-not timidly.

"Oh, I am going to live with my distinguished cousins. You know I belong to a very noble family, who live in a glass-palace, and I am going to live with them."

And Honey-suckle went on bragging about her dignified relatives while little Forget-me-not listened quietly.

At last they arrived at their destination.

The first thing the gardener did was to take the two flowers out of his bag.

To the great indignation of Honey-suckle, he took Forget-me-not first and planted her in a corner near a high wall, behind a very beautiful blooming bush.

"I feel sorry for you, my little friend," he said, "but you know I must hide you from the eyes of my mistress. The soil is good, and I hope you will not mind if you don't get so much sunshine."

"Oh, dear Gardener," said Forget-me-not, "I think it is lovely here. I like this quiet, shadowy place very much."

After he left Forget-me-not, the gardener took Honey-suckle, planted her in a pot and, opening one of the doors of a big hot-house, he put her on a shelf and said:

“Now, Honey-suckle, here you are right in the midst of your noble relatives.”

For a moment Honey-suckle’s breath was taken away by the hot, stuffy air that was in the room.

When she looked around her breath was taken away a second time by surprise.

She felt like a dwarf in the society of giants. Could those plants really be her relatives? Why, as tall as she was, she reached only half way up the stem of the other plants.

Looking up, she could see the beautiful flower heads in exquisite colors.

All her pride and self-possession had left her. She did not dare to open her mouth.

But the others did.

“What is this miserable creature doing in here?” These were the first words that reached Honey-suckle’s ears. They were spoken by a beautiful Azalea.

Honey-suckle summoned all the courage she had and said:

“I am your cousin; I came from the country to see you.”

“Cousin, ha, ha, ha!” A cruel laugh sounded

in Honey-suckle's ears. All the flowers joined in it.

"Cousin," sneered the Laurel; "I never knew of this branch of our family. I don't think we can be related to such a poor creature as you are. You must be mistaken."

"No," said Honey-suckle with quivering lips. "I belong to your family; the gardener told me so, and I thought I would come to live with you."

"Live with us, what an idea!" cried all the flowers.

"We will never recognize you as our relation. You had better go home right away," said Laurel.

"Did anyone of you ever hear about country-people belonging to our family?" asked Rhododendron.

"Oh, yes," said Azalea, "there are some beggars living in the country who claim to be distantly related to us. I heard it once in a lecture in the flower show, where I represented our family. It was disgraceful, the things I heard about them. I was shocked at the things I heard! Think of it, they are called 'naked flowers.' "

"Oh, please," interrupted Honey-suckle, "this is not true. We have dresses just like you have."

"Yes, but in the early spring you don't wait until the leaves come out. You open your buds before you are dressed in green leaves, and there-

fore you are called naked," Azalea concluded her speech.

Now Honey-suckle bent her head in shame. It was true, she had done that herself. She had not wanted to wait, and had opened her buds to the sun before the leaves had time to come out. But she never thought that for this reason they were talked about in a contemptuous manner.

She decided to say no more, and the other flowers ignored her. There was one little hope left in Honey-suckle's heart; that maybe the hot air would make her grow to the size and beauty of her cousins. Then they would have to acknowledge her.

She had a very queer feeling already. Maybe it was the beginning of the change.

The night came. Oh, what a long night it was for honey-suckle. She could not sleep. The warm air made it so hard for her to breathe.

She remembered the cool, fresh nights out in the meadow and the wonderful sleep she had enjoyed there, and how refreshed she had opened her eyes in the morning.

When, after endless hours, morning came she felt very weak.

As soon as Azalea opened her eyes she began to sneer at Honey-suckle:

"Look at this wonderful cousin of ours; does she not look lovely today?"

Honey-suckle herself could see now that she had faded considerably during the night. Her last hope was gone. She knew now that the only change coming to her would be death.

Out of her sad thoughts she was aroused at last by a breeze of fresh air, coming from an open door.

The gardener entered to attend to the flowers. He watered them all and when he came to Honey-suckle he noticed her condition.

"Poor Honey-suckle," he said, "I feel sorry for you. Maybe it were better if I took you out of here. I could not carry you back to the meadow, but I could set you in the back yard."

Summoning all her pride for the last time, Honey-suckle said:

"No, thank you, I am all right here."

The gardener left and the other flowers did not pay any more attention to her. It seemed that they had forgotten Honey-suckle's presence, and Honey-suckle was glad of that.

The big flowers talked to each other about their own affairs. Azalea was designated to become a present to the queen on her next birthday, which was to be celebrated soon. Laurel was to crown the greatest poet of the nation in the near future, and Rhododendron was to be present at a big flower show.

Poor Honey-suckle listened with a breaking

heart. Her strength was leaving her. She knew that she would have to die very soon.

The happiness of her former life stood before her eyes when she said:

“Oh, why was I not content with the life I had! Why did I insist on coming here in spite of all the warnings I had? Oh, if I only could see once more the meadow and say ‘Good-bye’ to all my friends. I was a vain, senseless creature, and now I am punished for it.”

A night of agony followed and the morning after, when the gardener came in, he saw that Honey-suckle was dying.

In order to give her some relief, he placed her on a small window that was high in the wall and opened it a bit.

The air refreshed Honey-suckle, but she knew that it could not save her life.

All of a sudden she was awakened out of her dull state by a familiar tune. Looking up, she saw her friend the mockingbird coming along.

Tears of joy came into her eyes.

“The dear friend, he has kept his promise to come to see me,” Honey-suckle said.

Meanwhile the mockingbird had come nearer and recognized Honey-suckle. There was a great compassion in his eyes when he saw in what condition Honey-suckle was. He said:

“Oh, dear friend, you have been the joy of

my eyes so long. Tell me what I can do for you."

Honey-suckle answered in a weak voice:

"If it is possible for you to get me out of this flower-pot, I would ask you to carry me home to my meadow to die there. I shall not be a heavy burden to carry. I am only a shadow of what I was before."

Without losing a moment's time the mockingbird, with his beak, loosened the soil in the pot and carefully took his friend and carried her through the air to the meadow.

What a fright to all the flowers and bees and butterflies when the mockingbird placed his burden on the ground. They did not want to believe their eyes when they saw their beautiful friend lying there dying.

Buttercup, her nearest neighbor, bent over her, saying:

"Oh, tell us, Honey-suckle, what has happened to you?"

Honey-suckle, with her last strength, said:

"Dear friends, I am rightly punished for my behavior. I was proud and vain, not content with the wonderful life I had. I wanted to become greater, and the dear Lord has punished me. My relatives despised me. The warm air in the hot-house killed me. I have no right to complain; I was warned. I am thankful that

God has granted my last wish, to die in this beautiful place, where I had spent such a happy life.

“Let my experience be a warning to you all. Thank the Lord every day for the wonderful life you can enjoy in this lovely spot, and never leave it. Good-bye, my friends, thank you for all your love.”

With these words Honey-suckle died.

Everything in the meadow was hushed. Tears were in the eyes of all the other flowers, and bees and butterflies forgot the honey.

At last Mockingbird began to sing a sweet song, a farewell to his dearest friend.

For days the flowers mourned for their sister, and bees and butterflies talked much about her, and her last warning was never forgotten.

Meanwhile little Forget-me-not bloomed happily in her dark corner near the wall. She had no sunshine, the big bush took all the view from her, but she was happy after all, because she knew she was blooming for somebody.

The gardener came every day to see her and told her how glad he was to have her near, and that he loved her more than all the beautiful flowers in the garden. This was enough recompense for all her deprivations, even for the sneer-

ing remarks she had to hear from the high bush that hid her from the eyes of others.

And Forget-me-not did all she could to deserve the love of the gardener. Her sweet, blue eyes had even a deeper blue than they had had out in the meadow, and the leaves had a darker green. In all her beauty she always stayed modest, and that was her greatest charm.

One day the rich lady, with many noble friends, came to visit the garden. She showed them all the beautiful flowers she was so proud of, and they were greatly admired.

Now it happened that the bush near the little Forget-me-not was one of the most interesting plants in the garden, and the lady took all her friends to it, and the gardener was with them to explain.

In order to see better, the lady stepped around the bush, and what did she see but the little Forget-me-not?

Her face grew dark with rage, and the gardener became pale.

“What does this mean?” the lady shouted, “did I not tell you all the time that no common flowers should be allowed to grow in this garden?”

And before the gardener could prevent her, she set her foot on the plant and stamped it to the ground.

Suddenly she stepped back, for out of the ground shot up a beautiful girl, with lovely blue eyes and golden hair.

The lady and all her guests were speechless.

The young girl stretched out her hand to the gardener and said:

“Thanks to you and the beautiful lady, I am released. I was once a very proud and selfish girl, long ago. Many a brave young man came to court me, but I only sneered and thought myself too good for any of them.

“Then there came a young man, who was the godchild of a fairy. I played an unfair game with him, aroused his passion first and then sent him away with a sneer. He died of a broken heart, but I was transformed by the fairy into a forget-me-not.

“She told me that in this humble disguise I should have to live until somebody would come to love me, and until a footstep should crush me to the ground.

“The gardener has loved me, and the lady, in her hatred, has stamped me to the ground, and so I am released.”

Never was there witnessed a greater surprise than on that morning in the beautiful garden.

The lady forgave the gardener, and the gardener married Forget-me-not and they lived happily ever after.

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